AVANT GARDE

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FRONT LINES

Frank Speltz is 26 years old and probably the greatest living expert on U.S. draft laws who is neither 1) a lawyer, nor 2) on General Hershey's payroll. For Speltz is "General Marsbars," columnist for the underground Washington Free Press and good-humoredly seditious top adviser to a generation of American youth that has better things to do than die in Vietnam.

It all started about four years ago when Speltz, a recent graduate (with a history major) from Howard University, received his "Greetings" in the mail. "I was utterly opposed to the war, but had no one to help me," he recently told Avant-Garde, "so I kind of did a total education job on myself. I read everything I could get my hands on pertaining to the draft and finally did get a conscientious objector classification.

"Afterwards, it seemed natural to use what I had learned to help other guys, so I joined the National Service Board, a professional conscientious objector agency run by Quaker-type pacifists, very respectable. There, I worked closely with General Hershey himself, who doesn't put down 'legitimate' objectors. I even had lunch with him now and then.

"Hershey is personally a nice guy, I suppose, so long as you keep him off his favorite subject, and a delight to have lunch with. You know, he loves his grandchildren and all that. But I'm sure it was a phone call from him that got me fired from the Service Board." Speltz had been indiscreet enough to honestly answer questions directed to him by non-conscientious objectors, concerning deferments for homosexuality, drug use, and the like.

Speltz continued to counsel young men who came to him personally. Then, a year ago, he launched his column. It is a sort of "Dear Abby" for the draft resister, answering in terrific detail and a breezy style inquiries covering every nook and cranny of America's Byzantine draft regulations (which may be modified from one day to the next by Hershey's memos to his staff). The gimmick of the column

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is General Marsbars, a kooky and mysterious personage who is usually missing but who occasionally sends a cryptic telegram, dutifully reproduced, from someplace like Guatemala. His mail is perforce answered by his secretary, Joy Almond.

Here are excerpts from Joy's advice to a young man who wished to "utilize every one of my rights and privileges" in an appearance before his draft board:

"Introduce yourself and immediately ask each board member to sign his name, address, age, and years of service with the board, on a piece of paper. Come armed with their names and addresses ahead of time (you have a right to that information...). If there is any discrepancy, do not permit the hearing to proceed until the board member produces some identification which shows his current address...

"Ask one board member (the stupidest looking, preferably) to summarize your classification history for the rest of the board. He won't know it, and will either attempt to look at your file or ask the clerk to do it. Ask him if that means he hasn't read every document in your file. Ask the other board members the same question.

"Bring your mother or a clergyman with you...primed to not leave unless dragged out....

"Bring home-baked bread and some cheese and wine into the room with you. Before the hearing begins, offer to share your feast with the board....

"Attempt to turn the hearing into an educational session on the draft law. Become a total expert on the law as it pertains to you. Begin by clarifying some error a board member makes by reading the correct regulation from the book, quoting chapter and verse—keep right on expanding into a full lecture."

Perhaps not everyone would have the nerve and aplomb to follow all the instructions Spelts-Marsbars dispenses. However, it must comfort the beleaguered youths who seek him out to discover that the system can, after all, be beaten at its own game. Until the law is adapted to allow for an individual's conscience, that is priceless information.

The yacht Phoenix, which for a decade has been carrying anti-war Quakers into troubled waters for peace, is at anchor in Hong Kong resting from her most recent voyage—to Haiphong with medical supplies for North Vietnam and the NLF. Her crew on that trip is back home, mostly at Quaker Action Group headquarters in Philadelphia, moved, edified, and a bit unsettled by their experience. What is it like, as representatives of a pacifist creed, to confront the people of a beleaguered warring nation?

Crew member John Braxton told Avant-Garde about the Phoenix's reception: "Under cover of darkness we were taken up the Cam River to the port of Haiphong, where we were given a wonderful welcome by a group of beautiful Vietnamese girls, each of whom had a bunch of flowers for us." The Quakers and their supplies were received with equal warmth by government and local Red Cross officials, then the conversation turned quickly to the war and the strength of antiwar forces in the U.S. "It was clear to us that they had an inflated view of the peace movement and its influence. Yet it did not seem to me that they were counting on the movement to force America to withdraw from Vietnam. On the contrary, they often talked about victory through a military defeat of the United States."

Later during their three-day stay, the visitors were escorted to sites of bomb destruction. Braxton recalls one in particular: "The surrounding area was three-story brick buildings, and the rubble over the many blocks was also of bricks. Many people had been killed and wounded in the raids. I looked around, but could not make out anything which seemed to be a military target—no railroads, no warehouses, no military installations. It was clear that the planes had simply bombed a residential area."

A different sort of shock awaited the Quakers on a guided tour of the Historical Museum of Haiphong, lately expanded to include exhibits drawn from the present war. Braxton again: "Various types of planes which had been shot down, some by rifle fire, were displayed with pride by the museum director, though our own reaction was one of horror for the men who had piloted them. Several documents which the U.S. fliers had carried were also visible, including one which asked for friendship, food, and water for shot-down pilots...." But they suppressed their revulsion and departed on good terms with their hosts.

One crew member who left with special reluctance is Mary Ann McNaughton, 23, who had hoped to stay and serve as a medical aide in a Vietnamese hospital. Her request was politely but firmly vetoed by government security officials. "We went to North Vietnam," she said, "to dramatize to the world our human unity with the people there, people who are supposed to be our 'enemies.' I was

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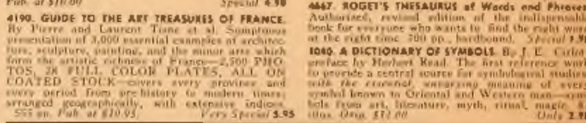

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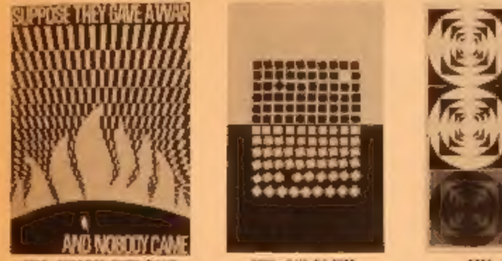

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very struck by the kindness of the Vietnamese we met. They profess to know and respect the tradition of freedom in America and seem to take the attitude that, 'When peace comes we'll all be friends.' Of course I couldn't share their enthusiasm about the war. While we were there the Tet Offensive was launched, and they came to us very excited and said, 'Isn't it marvelous?'

"I found myself faced with the question of how I would react in their place. I concluded that I would have to go on opposing all war and all killing. But they are brave and kind people. I couldn't tell them what to do."

The Phoenix will soon be back at its home base in Hiroshima, where it serves as living quarters for its owner, anthropologist Dr. Earle Reynolds. No new voyages to Vietnam are planned, though medical supplies still are sent through Canada (paid for with money drawn from individual accounts, since official Quaker funds have been frozen by the State Department). The Quaker Action Group has turned its energies to the assistance of the late Martin Luther King's poor people's movement.

And, as of this writing, the war goes on.

A couple of years ago Aram Saroyan, poet, son of William, and a really handsome young man, began to develop a lump, a harmless but disconcerting "sebaceous cyst," in the exact center of his forehead. By now it's gotten pretty big, but Saroyan has no intention of having it removed. The fact that the Buddha possessed an identical blemish is not lost on him.

Saroyan talked with Avant-Garde about this and other of his equally unique concerns this spring while in the midst of seeing his first book by a major publisher, Aram Saroyan, through the press at Random House. This book, to say the least, is itself unique, containing a number of poems made up of a single word, others of less than that, and hardly any running longer than one line. But neither his personality, as represented by that hieratic bump, nor his art, as represented (for instance) by a non-word like "eyeye" alone on a page, is going to be very comprehensible apart from an account of his 24-year life. As he recalls it:

He was born in New York and spent his first 12 years in southern California, site of his father's famous, nutty, robust sagas of Armenian immigrant life. Meanwhile his parents divorced, remarried, and divorced again. At last his mother took him back to New York and married the actor Walter Matthau. There he attended prep school, flunking the ninth grade and making it up in boarding school ("a torture machine"), and gradually discovered modern poetry. He was drawn especially by the dense, spare, American verse of Robert Creeley.

Three months at the University of Chicago and a term at NYU proved as abortive as, in one final stab, three months at the Columbia School of General Studies. Saroyan found himself to be a congenital drop-out. Having decided to make the most of it—a decision he says was tonic for his sanity—he acquired a New York apartment and bent himself to the making of poems. These he had published in a number of little and not-so-little magazines, including one he founded himself, called Lines. Then something very curious started happening. Never very long, his poems got shorter, and shorter, and shorter. His increasingly fantastic economy finally carried him over the brink into a whole new idea of what a poem is.

It is an idea as much visual as verbal, requiring the blank page as arena for the tiny event of the poem. The event might be a nexus of sense data, a sight inside a room run together with a noise outside it, or a thought with a sensation, or something ordinary with something weird. In any case, the result somehow carries a powerful charge, a terrific presence. Later, the event might even be a single word, funny or mysterious; or even less: a syllable like "ly" repeated four times, a "misprint," a three-humped letter "m." Then still less: a mythical page number —"59"—typed on a blank sheet. Then, finally, nothing at all.

Now, after a scant five years of writing, having assembled his best poems into four manuscripts and turned them over to Random House, Saroyan says he's done with poetry,...or that perhaps poetry is done with him, having led him through language into silence. His main interest at the moment is in getting his works properly published, to more or less close out his career as a poet. And then? He's not sure. Nor is he worried. He seems willing to let his future, like his cyst or his education, take care of itself. Recently, at the invitation of Mike Nichols, he went through the preliminary motions of starting a movie career, but the Hollywood hustle bothered him and he let it drop.

Back in New York now, Saroyan lives in an immaculate apartment on the Upper

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East Side, with a minimum of furniture and not a book in sight. Even his ancient Royal portable typewriter, to whose peculiar touch and typeface he attributes the character of much of his work, is packed away in a closet. "I want everything to be of the present," he says. "A shelf of books is a reminder of time, all that time you spent reading them. Horrible." The apartment does, in fact, seem to be a place outside of time. The only device present for marking it is a record player, which nourishes the atmosphere with a steady diet of the music Saroyan likes best—Dylan, the Byrds, Jimi Hendrix. His girl friend, quiet and charming, brings coffee as twilight begins to soften the unlighted room.

"My work took me out of words," he says. "Taken as a whole it outlines the one modern statement I think it's now possible to make. I have nothing to add. What the last poems are about is electric consciousness, electric structure. Reading is a time structure. I wanted to get out of that, to make works that were instantaneous. That's what electric structure is all about. 'Instant, multiple, and simultaneous,' as McLuhan says. But no way of writing can be all these things.

"Maybe television is a medium that can. I mean to get a television set once my books are published, or maybe two television sets."

Whatever he does, one might expect it to be unique and, somehow, quietly spectacular. The Buddha, it will be remembered, was just such a handsome, well-born young man.

In an article for the hip English magazine Oz called "In Bed With the Americans," a British girl deplores the mechanicalness and orgasm-fixation of U.S. lovers, and especially their passivity (which she sees reflected in the term "getting laid"). She concludes, "American men have one redeeming feature—good skin. But even this may be a disadvantage. It simply heightens the resemblance all of them bear to their mothers."

The vast transportation and communications networks that girdle the world may make some of us private citizens feel kind of outmoded, but for certain ruthlessly energetic free spirits they are a harp to play on. Such a one is John Wilcock, para-journalist and publisher and the Underground's man in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Tokyo, Athens, etc. Forty years old, small,

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ORIGINAL RAMBLER'S MAGAZINE.
Living proof that racy magazines for men are not a modern invention. This find, published in 1927, included pictures, portraits, articles, and biographical pieces.

PHOENIX OF SODOM, THE.
Queer doings of England's infamous Vere Street Coterie. Descriptions by the lawyer who defended love nest owner after what might easily be history's biggest vice raid.

QUINTESSENCE OF DISCIPLINE, THE.
An English lady's country vacation becomes an unforgettably happy experience.

ROMANCE OF LUST, THE.
Pungent adventures of a young man whose bizarre tastes are exceeded only by his stamina.

SCHOOL-FELLOWS, THE.
Two sweet girl graduates reminisce by letter about their school days...and fill each other in on postgraduate adventures.

TELL-TALE, LOVE'S.
Members of a love club entertain one another with personal recollections of a highly spiced nature.

UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE, THE.
The Autobiography of Captain Edward Sellon.
Author of erotic literature tells his own erotic story in a biographic fragment that proves truth is stranger than fiction. The work ends as abruptly as did the life of the author, who shot himself at age 46.

VENUS' SCHOOL-MISTRESS.
Story of women's schools where the three R's are replaced by the three B's: burching, beating, and brampling. Includes lecture on the three kinds of men who enjoy flagellation.

WOMAN, AN ESSAY ON.
Profane, bawdy parody of Pope's *Essay on Man*. Entry includes details of the Parliamentary prosecution of purported author, John Wilkes, Esq.

X*, LE CURÉ.**
Who was he? His name appears on the second title page of the *Manuel des Confesseurs*. The name I.B. Bouvier appears on the first title page. The work, by M. Maurice Lachatre, was an annotated translation of Bishop Bouvier's book. For it, Monsieur Lachatre was tried and condemned by the Church. But who was Le Curé X***?

YOKEL'S PRECEPTOR.
Where to go, what to do, and what to look out for in rootin'-tootin', 19th-Century London.

ZOPPINO, IL.
"...sensous, coarse, and even disgusting pictures of the Roman prostitutes." That's how Henry Spencer Ashbee describes this centuries-old classic whose author he believed to be Francisco Delicado.

DISCOVERY PRESS
SUITE 1904, 1 EAST 42ND ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

I enclose $19.50 (plus 75¢ shipping charges, total, $20.25) for a set of the handsome, three-volume *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature*. I understand that I am paying the special prepublication price for a work that will sell in bookstores for $35. I further understand that the *Encyclopedia* is THE definitive work on erotic love, that it is history's most complete opus on forbidden books, and that it contains upwards of 1,800 pages of descriptions, discussions, and excerpted passages.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

New York Residents please add 98¢ sales tax.
Not for sale to minors.

droopy-looking in a pleasant sort of way, and deceptively mild-mannered, Wilcock is a virtuoso of typewriter, telephone, telegraph, and air mail. Over the course of about 15 years of nonstop activity (starting with the cofounding of The Village Voice), he has erected an international infrastructure rivaling the CIA, consisting of devoted informants and collaborators on five continents. His current project, a heavyweight underground newspaper called Other Scenes, is edited and published wherever he happens to be on the trail of his 30,000-mile-a-year travels. In any city a few phone calls suffice to supply him with a bevy of contributors, flacks, and assistants, all working for free.

Recently arrived back in homebase New York via London (one issue of Other Scenes) and Tokyo (three issues and a wife, née Amber La Mann), Wilcock found his bathroom ceiling fallen in, his phone cut off, and his subtenant absconded without paying the rent. Bothered but unbowed, he has surfaced with yet another big Other Scenes, featuring articles by Tim Leary and about Andy Warhol, police brutality, the war, Greek Fascism, Japanese erotic comic strips, etc. His own column, which as usual is a heady mixture of news, views, helpful advice, and paranoid fantasies, tells you how to get a free guest card for the Osaka Trade Fair, puts down George Meany, complains about higher New York cab fares, suggests that Bernard Fall was murdered, predicts that garters will be the new fashion comeback, betrays Mayor Lindsay's telephone code name for his staff ("Winston"), speculates on George Romney's sex life, sneers at Yogi Maharishi, announces the demise of the New York art scene, analyzes San Francisco police tactics, gossips about assorted underground celebrities, and advises on how to evade the travel tax—among other things.

"My own successful formula for a newspaper is pot, art, religion, politics, sex, sociology, and revolution," he says. "My function is to be a bridge. I like to explain the hippies to the squares, not being either." A sort of cosmonaut of the generation gap. In other words. "The extremist," he continues, "is the most valuable member of society. Without him, nothing would ever change. And what we need now is lots of change, revolutionary change." But Wilcock is a rebel without a program, an innocent all-purpose agitator whose declared philosophy is "hit and run." And, regardless of his batting average, run he does.

These two men have just named you their beneficiary

They are Ralph Ginzburg (in derby) and Warren Boroson, Editor and Associate Editor of the erstwhile muckraking bimonthly **Fact** (which *The New Statesman* has called "the sawn-off shotgun of American critical writing"). Ginzburg and Boroson have just bequeathed you their combined literary estate.

They have done so through the medium of a 448-page volume entitled **The Best of Fact**, recently published by Simon & Schuster at $6.95, but now being offered to readers of *Avant-Garde* in a special edition for *only $3.95!!*

The Best of Fact contains over 30 articles that have made journalism history, including: "*Time*: The Weekly Fiction Magazine", "The Future of American Foreign Policy," by Prof. Arnold J. Toynbee; "Circumcision: The Unkindest Cut of All," by Dr. John M. Foley; "A Psychiatric View of the War in Vietnam," by Dr. Benjamin Spock; "The Golden Age of Graffiti", "How a Middle-Class American Housewife Goes About Getting an Abortion"; and hard-hitting opinions by scores of celebrities including Arthur Miller, Dwight Macdonald, Melvin Belli, John Updike, Mort Sahl, Cleveland Amory, Paul Goodman, Mark Lane, Tom Paxton, and Saul Bellow.

Here's what critics have said about **The Best of Fact**: "Prods, pokes, and punches America's leading sacred cows" —*Book News*. "Something to outrage everyone"—*Denver Post*. "Calls needed attention to shortcomings in American life"—*New York Times*. "Irreverent, controversial, uncommonly frank, impressive, tough"—*Library Journal*. "The most incendiary book in print"—*Marion* (Ind.) *Chronicle*. "It'll tear your heart out" —*Nashville Tennessean*. "Truly a mind-expander"—*Chicago Tribune*. "Raises hackles and speeds pulses"—*Madison* (Wis.) *Capital Times*. "Get it, read it, pass it around"—*El Paso Herald*.

When you consider that **The Best of Fact** contains the quintessence of three years of this galvanic magazine—worth $22.50—you'll realize what a fantastic offer this is.

To obtain your copy of **The Best of Fact**, simply fill out the coupon below and mail it with $3.95 (plus 35¢ for postage and handling) to: Avant-Garde Books, 110 W. 40th St., New York, N.Y. 10018.

Since quantities of this special printing of **The Best of Fact** are limited, we urge you to act *at once*. Remember Machiavelli's caveat: "A lion may bear with equanimity the loss of a father, but the loss of an inheritance can drive him to despair."

AVANT-GARDE BOOKS
110 W. 40TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10018

I enclose $3.95 (plus 35¢ postage and handling; total, $4.30) for a copy of **The Best of Fact**, which has been called "The most incendiary book in print."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gentlemen:

In February I sent you a rather spleenish note canceling my subscription to Avant-Garde—I really didn't like the first issue. Now, having just seen a friend's copies of Nos. 2 and 3, I am in a state of shock. They are so great! I confess to having been of little faith. Let's let bygones be bygones. Please reinstate my subscription.

Ernestine Hay
Flagstaff, Ariz.

Dear Sir:

Krassner is a prophet. Warhol has good things to say. Manninger is a heavy intellectual. But "Mr. and Mrs. Brown Go Walking," the pictures of that interracial couple being stared at as they walked down the street, delivered more than all three. And with no words.

Arnold Shelby
Tulane University
New Orleans, La.

Gentlemen:

I'm just back from Vietnam and anxious to share with you the glee of myself and some of my fellows at the stir caused there by your terrific magazine. The officers went nuts! I wish you could have seen the expressions of our C.O. and First Sergeant the first time they spotted Avant-Garde, face-down on a desk, zapping their eyes with "NO MORE WAR!" They accused me of being a hippie and all manner of things, most of them true. I thought they were going to have convulsions when they saw my love beads.

May you live forever!

James V. Stratton
The Bronx, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

You are to be commended for your courage in running that marvelous selection of poems by Ho Chi Minh and for choosing a man of Kenneth Rexroth's distinction to do the translation and introduction. All the mass-media's tons of dumbbell speculations and analyses do not equal this one sensitive probe into the heart and mind of a great man tragically cast by history as our "enemy." Should that other poet, Eugene McCarthy, become President, he and Ho could hold a joint reading for peace, at the U.N.

Lawrence Aflioto
Fargo, N. Dak.

Ginzburg:

Too bad you weren't in your mother's belly when the Nazis gassed her. There'd be one less cancerous Jew to erode away at the moral climate of America.

Does this offend you? Well, this is freedom of speech!!! If it does, indeed, offend you—so does the slobbering and panting eroticism of your slimy rag offend me. It takes art to be subtle about sex. It takes grace and dignity to sublimate it. It only takes a flea-bitten, mangy dog to show it off in the street.

Quit peddling your filth and sending the dollars therefrom to Israel!

Miss Hitler
Madison, Wis.

Sirs:

I pay to have garbage taken from my home. I don't pay to have it brought in. Remove my name, please.

Rabbi Samuel M. Silver, D.D.
Temple Sinai
Stamford, Conn.

Dear Sirs:

Your creation is a well-developed, earnest, and honest reflection of the real world of today. In a word, it is magnificent! Unfortunately, however, it promotes crime. One impressed browser, so taken by its contents as perused at the home of a friend, absconded with it and has not been heard from since. Thus the enclosed check, for a replacement copy.

James C. Sparks
Austin, Texas

Well hung

Be well hung in one of our super-giant, two-foot by three-foot portrait-posters. We enlarge your picture—or anyone else's—up to poster size from any photograph, whether wallet-size or 8 x 10, black-and-white or color. Just fill out the coupon below and mail it with your photograph (which will be returned) and $4.95 to:

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I enclose $4.95 (plus 45¢ for postage & handling, total, $5.40) for a super-giant, two-foot by three-foot portrait-poster to be made from the enclosed photograph.

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New York residents please add 85¢ sales tax © 1968 Pop Posters, PP 5

Catch all the birds in the bush

...wearing this dashing new authentic Australian bush jacket. Correct for any number of casual occasions. Made of Sanforized British Tan hopsack-cloth, this elegant bush jacket features a belt and four hefty button-down pockets. Its original cost was $23, but it is now being offered to you for only $9.95! To order, simply fill out the coupon below and mail it with $9.95 (plus 65¢ for postage and handling) to:

Cornucopia

1 E. 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

Cornucopia, 1 E. 42nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10017

I enclose $9.95 (plus 65¢ for postage) for an authentic Australian New Zealand Army Corps bush jacket. My size is as follows:

(Check one) ☐ small ☐ medium ☐ large ☐ extra large

Name

Address

City State Zip

Gentlemen:

Just received issue No. 3 of Avant Garde. We wonder how many other readers checked their Manhattan telephone directories and found that the serial number on Etienne Delessert's dollar bill is listed beside his name, disguised as a phone number.

Judith Glushanok
Joël-Philippe Dreyfuss
New York

Sirs:

Many "wars" are being fought in Vietnam. I'm afraid Headquarters has lost this one. If the general only knew. Perhaps, someday, he too will smile at a flower—we grin at him.

Sgt. G.R. Mayhew, USMC
Da Nang

Editors Note: Sgt. Mayhew encloses a memorandum to "All Marine Aircraft Group 11 Personnel" from their C.O., Gen. L.T. Frey. Excerpts follow:

"An all-hands effort...is going to be required to eliminate a problem which is surfacing in our cantonment. Undoubtedly, past indoctrination lectures have not been effective enough to reach all Group 11 Marines and impress them with the seriousness of offenses involving use or possession of marijuana.

"Our enemy has recognized the degrading effects of this narcotic....They have made a determined effort to make sure that supplies can be easily obtained near American installations. They hope to undercut American effectiveness, weaken our moral structure, and reduce our combat effectiveness....

"Dedicated hard-working members of the finest fighting organization in the world today cannot allow their Corps' reputation to be tarnished...by the irresponsible actions of a few misguided and immature individuals...who would participate in the degrading practice of using narcotics for a cheap and fleeting vicarious experience. How can Marines help? By reporting known or suspected violators to cognizant NCO's and Officers to ensure early apprehension....

"Those privileged to represent a country which is carrying the burden of world leadership must assume the responsibility entailed—AND WE ARE A WORLD LEADING NATION.

"(Signed) L.T. Frey,
Commanding Officer"

Amnesty Now!

AN EDITORIAL STATEMENT

This is an appeal to the conscience of America.

By now only the believers in the myth of military "victory" and the mad dogs in our midst are not united in the hope that the Vietnam War will soon be ended. The pursuit of peace has suddenly become the official policy of our government. And yet America's martyrs to peace, thousands of protesters and draft resisters, men and boys whose crime has been that of saying "No" to national moral disaster, are being persecuted, jailed, and driven into foreign exile with unparalleled ferocity. These are America's political prisoners.

The statistics of men in jail or in exile reveal a widespread pattern of resistance and repression. A total of 965 men are now in federal prisons for resisting the draft, their sentences varying up to five years (often with huge fines). Five hundred indictments are pending. Seventy-five servicemen are in military prisons for various forms of "non-cooperation" with the war in Vietnam, while 282 have defected and fled to foreign lands. The number of draft-age American boys who have sought sanctuary in Canada exceeds 10,000, while the number of those who have burned or turned in draft cards and been reclassified 1-A as punishment is incalculable.

Then there are the other brave victims, older men, whose dramatic disobedience of military and civil laws has attracted the admiring attention of many who were about to give up on America: Dr. Howard Levy, for example, who is now in solitary confinement in Ft. Leavenworth military prison for refusing to teach the art of healing to men whose primary mission was to kill; Father Philip Berrigan, who poured blood over draft board files; and Dr. Benjamin Spock and Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., who dared "aid and abet" youthful resisters of our bloody Asian adventure.

We are all casualties of this wretched war, poisoned by the lies and fears and hatreds it has poured into the body politic. If we are to recover our self-respect as a nation, we cannot wait for peace. The task of reconstruction must begin immediately with the payment of our collective debt to those who have acted as *the avant-garde of our conscience*, suffering for a truth that even our government, in its hypocritical way, is beginning to face: This war is intolerable.

Amnesty Now!

Amnesty for the exiles, who fled in their dismay at a homeland that appeared to them to have gone mad, to have deserted *them*. Let us waive the unjust law and bring them back, if they will have us. *Amnesty* for the protesters, the "trespassers," and the "disturbers of the peace," who, in the darkest night of the country's apathy, shouted the truth on the streets and campuses of America. Let us thank them for their passionate sanity. *Amnesty* for Levy and Berrigan and Spock and Coffin. Let us crush their indictments and give them medals instead. *Amnesty*, especially, for the boys in jail, those willing victims of the narrow-eyed malice of draft boards and judges, the pilory of military courts, the cynical depredations of politicians, vilification in the press, and the ignorant rancor of their countrymen.

These are America's heroes, not Marines who machine-gun peasant villages or pilots who plant flowers of napalm in the suburbs of Hanoi—though these, too, are America's children. Yes, *Amnesty* also for the soldiers, an amnesty of love. They have suffered much, slogged and suffered and died, living in hell while we at home comfortably debated the whys and wherefores. Let us welcome them home from their nightmare war.

Home, where the real struggle, the struggle against hatred, bigotry, despair, and the dead hand of the dark recent past, is only beginning.

PLAYHOUSE OF THE RIDICULOUS

AMERICA'S THEATRICAL AVANT-GARDE ASSAULTS THE MIND WITH A BARRAGE OF CAMP, FLOWER POWER, SURREALISM, ANARCHY, MIXED MEDIA, DADA, AND SEXUAL AND ESTHETIC OUTRAGE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELIOT ELISOFON

Down on New York's ill-famed Bowery, amidst all manner of dirt and squalor, noise and decay, stands a lovely, white-columned old bank building, now converted into a playhouse called the Bouwerie Lane. The anomaly is striking enough, but it's nothing compared to what's inside, namely, one of the wildest, most brilliant—and most "perverse"—experiments in American theater history: The Playhouse of the Ridiculous. This three-year-old congregation of eccentric genius represents the acme of the New York super-Underground, Off-Off-Broadway avant-garde. It has, by the way, but little relation to the European "Theater of the Absurd"; it is as American as John Birch and the blue movie, a volatile emulsion of camp, flower-power, surrealism, anarchy, mixed media, Dada, world literature, and sexual and esthetic outrage. If the art of the theater is indeed (as people have been saying) dead, this is a flush on the corpse bright enough to light up the sky.

The Playhouse of the Ridiculous materialized out of the random chaos of the Underground via a lucky combination of several unique (to say the least) talents. Foremost at the beginning were the incredible wit and savvy of Playwright Ronald Tavel, whose style might be described as mixing Brecht and Beckett with Hellzapoppin, and the directorial fireworks of John Vaccaro, whose background included academic training and first-hand experience of Japanese puppet theater. At the time (July, 1965), Tavel was making a series of movies with Andy Warhol, on the order of a political spoof entitled The Life of Juanita Castro (in which Fidel, Che, et al., played by girls, berate Juanita, played by a boy). Eventually dissatisfied with the vagaries of Warhol's Superstars, he teamed up with Vaccaro, marshaled his own actors, and opened what was to be a one-shot production of Juanita and a new ("psychedelic") play, Shower, at a gallery on the Lower East Side. The success of this enterprise, while not exactly stupendous, was so gratifying that the neophyte company reformed itself as a "theater club," moved into a playhouse on 17th Street, and started putting on full-length Tavel plays, of which the first was The Life of Lady Godiva, and the second, Indira Gandhi's Daring Device.

Indira Gandhi brought PHOTR its first widespread recognition, though from somewhat unexpected quarters—two major governments, the Mayor of New York, and the FBI. The plot of the drama, such as it is, is typical PHOTR hijinks: Indira is in love with an Untouchable, whom she allows to have at her with a mammoth dildo (the "Device"). An Indian student who chanced to view this diversion was not edified. He told the Indian Embassy about it, they had a look for them-

selves, and all hell broke loose. New Delhi phoned Washington, Washington phoned the Mayor, and before long a small army of G-men, city investigators, cops, fire inspectors, and assorted other public harassers descended en masse upon the little playhouse on 17th Street. Protests of poetic license, etc., notwithstanding, PHOTR was compelled to clear the boards of Iradira and to lay low for a while. Shortly thereafter, Tavel quit the company over artistic differences (he felt his plays were not getting sufficiently controlled and serious treatment), and a young actor named Charles Ludlam took over as bard-in-residence. His first effort, Big Hotel (an exercise in the Tavel style, with variations), showed that the (red) flag was still there.

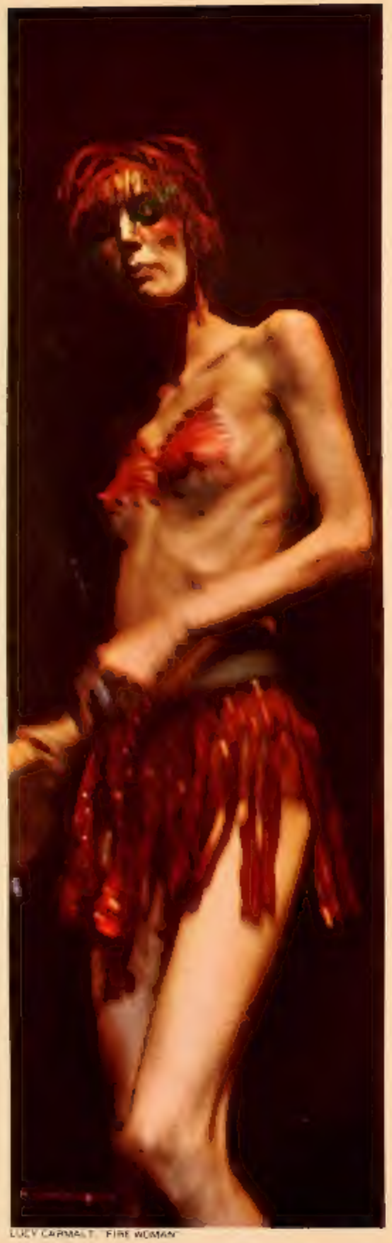
Which brings us up to date—and downtown to the Bouwerie Lane, where PHOTR's latest offering, Ludlam's Conquest of the Universe, opened last fall to awed reviews from even the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. It marks some kind of ultimate in the company's genre, an extreme marriage of method to madness attended (for once) by a truly lavish production and mounted in a decent playhouse, complete with revolving stage. It concerns the surreal adventures of the Conqueror Tamberlaine among the kings and queens of his captive planets, an assortment of beautiful and improbable creatures. In traditional PHOTR style, most of the women's parts are taken by men and vice-versa, though even this convention is not strictly adhered to. Backed up by a vicious hard-rock band, bathed in shifting colored and ultra-violet lights, decked out in costumes ranging from raunchy to resplendent to near-nudity, the characters cavort through a script that is a compound of the most idiotic jokes and puns and slapstick with erudite quotations, high comedy, and other sublimities. Also in accord with PHOTR tradition, there is lots of room for improvisation, and the exact same Conquest of the Universe has perhaps never been performed twice.

What all this amounts to from the spectator's viewpoint is the kind of primitive joy and amazement theater is supposed to have had before it got "legitimate," "modern," and moribund. As is often the case, the most avant-garde turns out to be the most ancient, and PHOTR may have more in common with Aristophanes than with Ionesco. For one thing, there is the brazen exploitation of present-day manners, mores, and politics. PHOTR is a living mirror held up to all that is wildest and most uncanny in our age. If the image in it is not precisely legible, that would be because we are, ourselves, a little blurred.

Asked what influences presided at the inception of PHOTR, Tavel cites "Pop, Camp, Psychedelic, and Art Nouveau," in other words the cream of recent fad and fashions, whipped (curdled?) into total theatrical froth. But the real model after which the company has taken shape—if its madcap free form can be called "shape"—is the Hollywood movie, in particular the Hollywood movies of the 30's, and just any old Hollywood movie starring Maria Montez. Though he himself started it, in fact, Tavel eventually despaired of the extent to which PHOTR had gone over to movie-camp, though the average theater-goer is not likely to suffer from such compunctions. For the camp here is not of the familiar brand of nostalgic mush, but a sort of resurrection. The "Star System," which dissolved a few chosen personalities into portable auras of divine glamor, lives again. The people on the Bouwerie Lane stage carry themselves like beings from another, more vivid universe, leering out at the audience from under the thin disguise of their "roles." The effect is both creepy and marvelous.

But just as Hollywood's Star System was murder on the private lives of its gods and goddesses, so too for the luminaries of PHOTR. With this difference: Hollywood feathered its cages with money, the New York Underground with next to none. Success itself, in fact, has proved to be the company's stickiest problem. The members (none of whom belong to Equity, even aren't used to it. As painter prestidigitator Wynn Chamberlain, Conquest's producer, put it, the Underground traditionally has been a kind of merry "Losers' Workshop," providing outlet and camaraderie in the face of public scorn and general poverty. Now that children of this world suddenly face the prospect of making an actual living from it, freak-outs abound. At the very beginning of rehearsals for Conquest an almost fatal schism split the group, as—for reasons that remain obscure—Ludlam and many of the top stars, including the fabulous Mario Montez, walked out to mount their own, artier production—retitled When Queens Collide—which has been playing on a once-a-week basis at the Village Gate. And by the time Conquest was barely three months old, some of its parts had been filled by no less than five different performers. A veritable legion of understudies must be kept on constant call. If PHOTR accurately satirizes the agonies of our time, it is perhaps because it knows some of them from the inside out.

Miraculously, however, the Playhouse of the Ridiculous has survived, has even begun to flourish. Maybe this is because, as Chamberlain says, it is more an idea than a group, and ideas die hard. Maybe America at last has a real theater avant-garde to match (and atone for?) its power. And maybe the idea of the Ridiculous is not so ridiculous, after all.



LUCY CARMALT, "FIRE WOMAN"

THE GIRLS:

LYRA VIOLET, "QUEEN OF SATURN"

SIERRA BANDIT, "FIRE WOMAN"

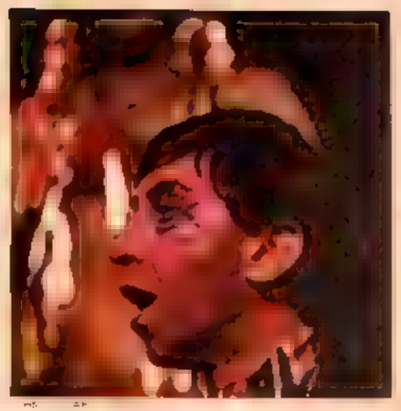
ULTRA AGAIN

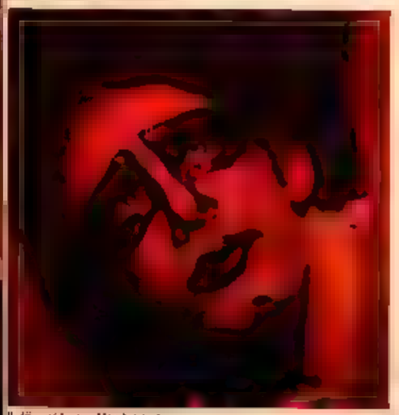
JIM BRIDGE, "VENUS"

LYNN REYNER, "ALICE"

FRANKIE FRANCINE, "FIRE WOMAN"

THE CHARACTERS:



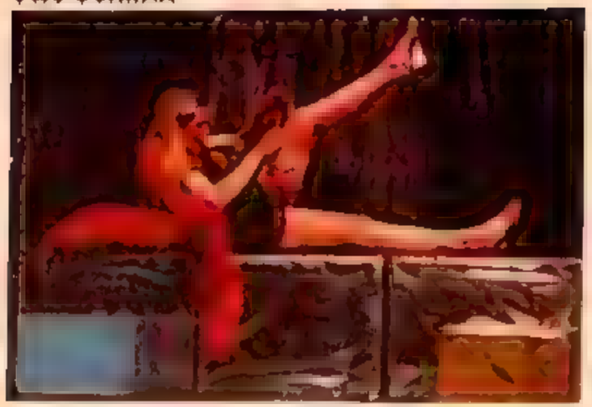


THE ENSEMBLE:

THE ACTION:

THE LEADING LADY: LYNN REYNER

THE CLIMAX:



THE END.

SWITCHED-ON RADIO: WBAI

HERE'S ONE STATION THAT REFUSES TO HAVE ITS TUBES TIED

It's seven o'clock in the morning. your transistor is set at 99 5 on the FM band and nothing happens. You twist the knob a little to the left of 99 5, and then to the right, but still nothing happens. Announcers from other stations are there on the left and the right alert modulated, and totally unexciting telling you that it is two minutes past seven, and the temperature is 53° in Central Park, and the traffic is

A mild panic sets in. Maybe 99 5 isn't right. Maybe and this fear is not entirely without foundation. WBAI-FM doesn't have enough money to broadcast this morning. Then when you're about to give up hope, you catch the beginning of the "William Tell Overture" interrupted by the voice of Larry Josephson who opened the station late because he slept late, telling you that "This is WBAI the world's worst, most sardonic and least pious radio station, noncommercial, listener-sponsored radio, New York City," and that "Our transmitter is located on the Empire State Building, King Kong, chief engineer"

Then Josephson hacks and wheezes for a few seconds and WBAI, the radio station where cough buttons are irrelevant is on the air for another day a day in which it will be expected to serve as anything but a radio station. To some of its listeners, it is a sort of airborne ACLU. To others, it's a combination switchboard-bulletin board for things hippie, Yippie, New Leftian, and SNCCian. To some, it's a treasury of black humor and good music with no irritating commercials, a source of news that can't be got elsewhere, and of announcements that wouldn't make sense elsewhere. To the housewife-prisoners of Scarsdale, it's a trip into the world outside. To the long-haired Free People of the East Village and their weekend compatriots in Queens, it's the news of the latest big bust and directions on how to get to the next one. the McLuhanesque equivalent of the *Village Voice* the *East Village Other*, and *The Realist*, all rolled into one, if such a thing can be imagined. To the war-angry it is a source of news that can be believed. Whatever WBAI really is, and it is likely that no two listeners could ever agree on that, it is undeniably a listener-sponsored *force* the place in New York where an awful lot of people of diverse backgrounds get fuel for their ideals.

Take, for instance the people who worship Bob Fass, who at 35 is the senior agitator at WBAI. Fass has a nightly show from midnight until three four, five, or six in the morning, in which he welds together people who never even thought about each other. He has a 50-year-old lady who admires and believes in him and he has a 12-year-old listener who sneaks his transistor radio into bed at night the way some of us used to take a flashlight under the covers so we could read comic books.

A little more than a year ago Fass organized a "fly-in" at Kennedy Airport. The idea was to go to the airport at midnight and just let the stark beauty of the empty corridors and concourses turn you on. The event was advertised only on WBAI and only after midnight. The night of the fly-in turned out bitterly cold and Kennedy Airport is difficult and expensive to get to. But 3000 people turned up and on At least two of them got married later. Fass was pleased proud, and amazed. "This was the first inkling that I had that there were so many people and that they wanted so much to get together," he said later.

He went on to promote a "be-in" on the Lower East Side, in which folks from radioland (Fass calls them his "cabal", he opens the show with the words, "Good morning cabal") cleaned up a slum street in a way that the New York City Department of Sanitation had not been able or willing to do in its entire history. Then last March Fass helped promote a "Yip-in," or gathering of Yippies who are politically-active hippies at Grand Central Station at midnight on a Friday.

Another 3000 turned up. The meeting went along fine for a while, until some cherry bombs exploded and the New York City Police Department suddenly decided the station was private property (remember the Freedom Rides and the early sit-ins?), and went through the crowd cracking heads brutally and throwing people through glass doors.

The first reaction of many of the spectators and participants was to rush to telephone booths to call the station and tell Bob Fass

[illegible]

The people at the first WBAI could see from WBAI is some[illegible] station. Jas[illegible]

Part [illegible] with the [illegible] that there are [illegible] over [illegible] and [illegible] are [illegible] that [illegible] was [illegible] that [illegible] and [illegible] know [illegible] are [illegible] people [illegible] know [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

cism about anything.

They play records, some of them outlandish self help recordings that Josephson, Post or Fass have discovered. Josephson's favorite is an instructional record that promises to increase the size of your breasts by will power alone. It's based on the old erection principle: you *think* more blood into them. Most of the recordings, though, are contemporary folk and rock, social protest and social comment including such interesting combinations as Tom Paxton singing his composition, 'Mister Bush' back to back with the Clear Light version of the same song. A lot of the music that is heard on WBAI is heard there first. Arlo Guthrie first taped "Alice's Restaurant" at the station, and WBAI was the first station to play Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind', Country Joe and the Fish have taped songs in the studio, and WBAI recognized, long before anybody else, the immortality of Tiny Tim.

Partly because WBAI's big three have such excellent credentials in the groovy community *because* they recognized Dylan and Guthrie and Tiny Tim first, each of them has had offers from other stations and agencies in the little world of New York broadcasting. What used to be called Madison Avenue is constantly dusting after people like Post, Fass and Josephson, and the money it offers makes working at WBAI look like involuntary servitude. So far, each of the three has turned the offers down, the reason always boiling down to the fact that they wouldn't be free anywhere else. They told me. 'You just can't say "son-of-a-bitch" on the air,'" said Josephson of one station that was wooing him. The money would be nice, but no other station in New York can promise the one thing that makes WBAI unique: its utter freedom.

The three personalities exercise that freedom in different ways, and that is the reason why they all have different and loyal followings. Bob Fass enters Master Control a moment or so before midnight each weekday and with him go the hopes of hundreds of people: political and social outcasts, some of them, knowing that Fass will give them sympathetic hearings. Fass is a gentle man, and he is willing to listen to folks.

'I could probably make a list of the things that are important to me: things that excite me," he said not long ago in an interview, "and I can trace almost every single one of them to some program, some idea that I was first exposed to in the six or seven years I've been listening to WBAI. It's been probably the most important educational influence in my life.

"I'm interested, myself, in enlarging people who care about people, and who want to get together to make things a little more comfortable for more people. The way things are now, the government doesn't really care about people, and *people* don't really care about people. And that's pretty much why we're as hung up as we are.

"I'm just the guy who happens to be at the switchboard," he said, speaking both literally and figuratively, "and all these people are plugged into the switchboard, and what I do really is just open it up and let people know it's there."

Does this give one a hunger for a larger switchboard? "I would like to reach more people, certainly. But I don't think I could be as free any place else. There have been tentative little nibbles from networks, and from larger stations in the city, but what they always wanted to buy was a certain kind of thing that I was doing at the moment. And the great thing about WBAI, and maybe the thing that the other stations and networks will never be able to steal from us, is that they'll never allow someone to make a mistake, allow you to experiment and fail. And that's the fantastic thing about this station. Very often we make mistakes, and there's chaos and disorder. But this very chaos and disorder is exciting."

Larry Josephson is a totally different sort of person. He is essentially a night person who works at a day person's job, and that is what makes you want to listen to him instead of the professional day people on the other stations who are so good at sounding cheerful. "This is Radio Free Dirty Linen," he says, at seven o'clock, as you are waking up and you know he is, too. Or "This is WBAI, the radio station of the sick, the lame, the halt, the blind."

He talks a good deal about politics. 'I wonder,' he said one morning, "if there's really any difference between Humphrey, Kennedy and McCarthy, if they're not just *effecting* the difference over the war in order to create some interest in what would otherwise be a very dull election, in order to get more than six people out to vote.

'What really makes me confused is that I'm uncertain of the depths of Mr. Kennedy's passion. That is, it seems to me entirely possible that if he were elected on a modified peace platform, something like: he wouldn't send American boys 10,000 miles to do what Asian boys should be doing, something like that, that it seems to me that Mr. Kennedy would be capable, after a night of reassessing his position and musing and brooding introspectively to the accompaniment of the clicks of 10,000 photographers from *Life* magazine and other such places, that Mr. Kennedy would be capable of announcing reluctantly and after reassessing his position that he's declined to bomb Brooklyn. This is WBAI, paranoid radio in New York.'

In real life Josephson is not very different. He sits at his tiny desk in the crowded WBAI office, tearing at bits of a piece of wrapping paper that once covered the entire desk top, wearing a full black beard and a grey suit with a poison green turtleneck sweater. On the wall behind him is a pair of earphones, the earpieces have halves of bagels cemented to them. He declines to explain what he is on the grounds that he doesn't know.

'I just sort of do my thing, which is a lazy way of saying I am whatever I am on the radio. I'm either hostile, or friendly, or sage, or pseudo-sage, or opinionated, or I just try to make beautiful things with records, or ugly things with records. I suppose the program is sort of a psychodrama for me, a drama between me and my audience, between me and my fantasies and my pretensions.

'I don't think I have a mission. I often make fun of people with missions, like Phil Ochs or Timothy Leary or Bobby Kennedy. That's a trap I hope to stay out of. But sometimes I fall into that trap, the trap of taking yourself seriously in a political context or a social reformation context. I must communicating, effecting a kind of therapy for myself. I'm getting things off my chest. What concerns me is not what Renata Adler had to say to Dwight McDonald in the latest letters column of *The New York Review of Books*, but what concerns me are paranoid fantasies of concentration camps and Bobby Kennedy and the ultimate dishonesty of politicians in our system and how we can have such shitty subways and things like that. So I try not to go along with the latest hippie political party or the sympathy for the latest bust, or whatever. I generally am against the police and for protestors and students, but not slavishly.

That last comment sounded a bit anti-Fass. Listeners especially loyal to one of the big three are all the time calling or writing in, claiming that Josephson is better than Fass and Post, or that Fass is the best, or that Post is the best. And each of the three frequently makes snotty comments about the others. Was there anything behind the alleged rivalry?

"Well, it exists," said Josephson, "but it's a true ambivalence, based initially on friendship. We were and still are great friends. Fass was sort of the great father of both Post and myself. He brought us up and recognized what ever latent talents we might have and encouraged us, and so forth. But one eventually grows up and rebels against one's father. There are conflicts, sometimes about petty things, sometimes about things that are said, differences in approach. Bob tends to take his causes seriously, and I tend to make fun of all causes. If you see Fass as the father and Post and me as, in a sense, the siblings, and Pacifica as the Holy Ghost or something, you sort of get the model for the rivalry."

Steve Post, the 24-year-old from the Bronx, the one who was hired over the telephone as WBAI's bookkeeper and then became its chief announcer and then its weekend personality had hardly been on the air for a minute one Saturday night before the phone rang and a listener asked if he were speaking to Bob Fass.

"No!" replied Post patiently, but with a trace of indignation. "It's not Bob Fass. What a way to start off a day!" Then he played a record, followed by a magnificent on-the-air seizure, after which he announced. "I just concluded one of the longest coughing spells of my life. I just coughed up a *kidney*, and that's a long trip."

Then Post commented that the phones were lighting up all at one time, leading him to believe that his listeners were only paying half attention to him and half attention to *Psycho*, which was showing that night on television. "What's happening," he said, "is everybody is taking time out during the commercial in *Psycho* to call me and then if the phone doesn't get answered by the end of the commercial they hang up."

Again, when Post said she had not been watching *Psycho*, that rather she had been having a terrible fight with her boy friend, and should she call him and tell him that all is forgiven or just wait it out? Post advised her to write to *Playboy* magazine with her problem or if it was urgent to send *Playboy* a telegram. Or, at least, she could call another radio station. Post said he was not competent to answer.

Later on a weekday afternoon while he was doing a trick as the chief announcer, Post sat nervously in the swivel chair in Master Control, nervous, he said, because he really is just a 24-year-old kid from the Bronx with no college education and he's afraid of interviews. What about the fierce listener-loyalty each of the three personalities commanded?

If the listeners act loyal, he said, "It's because they feel that they own a part of you, as they do. They pay fifteen bucks a year and they, in a sense, own part of us and everything else. It's a good thing, I think, because we feel closer to the listeners."

Like many others at the station, Post feels strongly about the freedom he's been allowed to exercise and, like the others, he expresses paranoia about those who would like to limit that freedom. He recalls that during the McCarthy era, Pacifica was "investigated," and, like most other sensible people to the left of, say, Hubert Humphrey, he feels that an even more terrible rerun of that era is not at all unlikely.

Post chewed on a tuna fish sandwich that an emissary from Larry the Bagelman's had brought up. The self-correcting clock corrected itself and a tape ran out, and Post the announcer went on the air momentarily to identify the station. He fluffed the pronunciation of a composer's name, and realized that he'd fluffed it, but it didn't seem to bother him.

"Poverty, you know," he said, off the air again, "does keep us together with a mutual cause and a goal, and there is this feeling of being a poverty-stricken group of people, you know, the martyr complex. So in that case it's helpful. I love to get on the air and bitch about how poor we are, and how badly things are going. But on the other hand, it's no fun coming in here before going on the air and trying to find a reel of tape so that I can use the tape-delay and take telephone calls on the air, and not finding one because, you know, our credit is no good with the tape company.

'But don't let me give you the impression that it's getting worse. On the contrary. Especially during the last six months or a year, I've seen it develop, the tremendously increased popularity of the station. One reason I think, is that the times and the state of the world are so bad that people have been forced to become concerned and are finding WBAI.

'It's taken us seven years to come into our infancy, and that's where we are now, and we've got an awfully long way to go, but I think we're already becoming a major force in New York City. We always have been a force to a certain group of people, but there's something new happening. You see it at the WBAI benefit parties. The people who come are either below 28 or over 55. There's nobody in between. So there's the old leftists who've been listening to WBAI for years and years and years, and the new young radical revolutionary teeneybopper-rockers, who also are involved and interested.

And there are always people tuning in who have never heard the station before. That's the amazing thing about the station. We can't take any surveys or polls to see who's listening. But there are always little indications. Like I don't go through a Saturday or a Sunday night program without a dozen phone calls from people saying, 'I've never heard this station before, this is fantastic,' or 'This is terrible,' either one. And so there is really an incredible number of people just finding out about WBAI, and the audience is either constantly changing or, more likely, constantly growing.

'This is not a radio station to a lot of people. It's a *friend*. I've had so many calls over the years, people saying, 'Listen, can WBAI be picked up in Such-and-such, New Jersey?'

"And I'll say, 'I don't think so,' and they'll say, 'That's too bad, because I was going to move there, I guess I'll have to change my plans.'

'And I don't know for sure, but I would guess that this isn't true for any other radio station in the world, that it's so important to some people and that they feel so much a part of it, that they would base a decision on where they're going to move on whether or not they can listen to it. And that is always the best compliment.'

It's a compliment that most *people* don't get, let alone a radio station.

POETRY BY COMPUTER

There must be some things a computer can't do. But aside from pole vaulting it's getting harder and harder to name them. And now the electronic monster is also a poet. Maybe a good one, even. What is poetry, anyway, or some kinds of poetry, at least, but words stringing together on a page to a musical, surprising, or otherwise interesting effect? And this a computer can do. Like crazy, producing in 10 minutes the normal week's work of its old-fashioned human counterpart. All it requires is an engineer to program its grammar and vocabulary and a man of taste to winnow its rhapsodic outpourings. The best of these outpourings, being uncontaminated by stylistic haunts and conceits, comprise an incongruous but really striking surrealism, and though the computer may not yet be the greatest of poets, it's certainly among the freshest and most original. Would you believe an antipoet of the future featuring the works of IBM 360? Click.

The poems below were written by an IBM 360 assisted by IBM programs analyst Joseph Sheaffer, who programmed it for various verse forms and loaded it with random words and phrases from several modern poets. From there, a standard 500-odd stanzas the following were selected and juxtaposed by Avant-Garde to emphasize the machine's ingenuous formulaic and moving repetitions, as the same word or phrase recurs again and again in ever-new and surprising context. Of course this arrangement is only one among thousands of possibilities, which suggests a role in the future for human poets, after all—computer poem editors. Next [illegible] IBM invents a way to program satire or criticism and creates an electronic Keats. Don't you doubt it?

HEIRESS

THE HEIRESS ABOVE HER THING MISTS
WALKS
THE NEXT ROOM BEYOND RUINED THE FUTURE
CERTAINLY USED TO LEAD
HERMITS FLOWERING THE TOUGHEST TINTED DISTANCES

TO REST HERMITS
TO FEEL
TO DIE
THE RED LOVE-CARS FIRST ENTERED

VERTICAL BLOSSOMS TAKE ENLARGING IN LOVE-CARS
TARNISHED EYELIDS OF STONE CRINGE EQUALLY IN THE FUTURE
THE OBSOLETE GOSSIP LIVES PRETENDING ROCKS, MOSS

TO BE ROCKS, MOSS
COURSES THE MOON BLUSHED

GLISTENING A FOOTSTEP BLUSHED
THIS HIS POISON
THE CREEDLEST SPRING SNOW EXCITES

NOBODY BY SIMPLE SPRING SNOW
ALONE FLOATS
THE MOON ON THE TOUGHEST SEVEN TULIPS

SEVEN TULIPS KILLED LIGHT
THE TOUGHEST GOSSIP CRINGES
THE SEAL CANNOT BE
AFTER THE DOORWAY

BRIGHT THE HEIRESS ADMIRES TO DIE WATCHING
PUNGENT JOY KILLED WITHIN LOVE CARS

THE NIMBLE SHARK

THE POIGNANT VINE LEAF SLIPPED WITH ANGER IN THE RIVER FORD
AND A VERMILION SHARK WENT FORTH IN REVERENCE OF THE SILKEN CORD

THE GENTEEL BIRD HOUSE FLASHED BRIGHTLY IN THE BESIEGED TOWN
WHILE THE SUPPLE WOMAN WHISPERED WITH MENACE FOR THE PROPER NOUN

THE FAWNING SAINT RANGED WIDE MALIGNANTLY TO THE GREAT FEAR
THE LUCID SIREN RESTED EXPERTLY FOR THE UNKNOWN SEER

ALAS, THE NIMBLE SHARK MINCED GAILY TO THIS SACRED PLACE
THE LUCID STONE CRESCENT OVERLOOKED WISTFULLY THE QUICKENING PACE

ASTRONOMY

TASTE AND TOUCH BRIGHTEN SPRING SNOW
WEEDS BROUGHT THE REFUSAL
UNBEARABLY

WEEDS LOITERED WESTERN STARS
THE EARTH CATWALKS THE EASTERN
LESS VIVID

TO REST THE EARTH
TO HAVE FOG BREATH
THE LITTLE WESTERN STARS FOUGHT

A LIONESS

UPON THE SHORE
ALL NIGHT
GROTESQUELY
FRIGID FINAL ALONESS SAYS

AFTER A RIVER
TOO SOON
TO FEEL
SHINING MEAT-EATING EMOTION GRINNED

BEYOND THE SKULL

HAPPY CRIED SELF-CONSCIOUSLY FLEEING THE CITY
GREEN MY WIFE GIVES TO FOCUS AND CUNNING PASSAGES
NAKED MY NORTH ROOM GLIDING IN ITS HOMICIDAL EYE
SECRETIVE THE STREETS LIVE GULPING WITH MEDITATIONS
INLAND MOUNTAINS HURLED AS TRUMPETS BELOW BLADES

ANALGES CINLAND MOUNTAINS GROW TO BE MY HEAD
SECRETIVE CELLS WATCHED GULPING SO THAT HELL
TARNISHED MY NORTH ROOM TO ARRANGE BEYOND THE SKULL
CUNNING PASSAGES MEDITATE EYELIDS OF STONE
WHITE WESTERN STARS HAD BROUGHT WIND INTO THE CITY

THE STEEL

VEINS ROUSE THE STEEL
JOY PROTRACTS THE DIRECTION

MISTS JITTER THE STATELESS
RED FIRE WEAVES LOVERS

NAKED PLEASURES BEGIN
THE STEEL

LEROI JONES: POET LAUREATE OF THE BLACK REVOLT

B[illegible] JELDAHL

When they say "It is Ro[i] who is dead," I wonder who will they mean?

Photographs of LeRoi Jones show a smooth, square, bearded brown face often punctuated between the eyes by two [illegible]-shaped wrinkles bespeaking a kind of con[illegible] No less [illegible] is the way he holds his body. Bantam, lean, by turns elegant and tough-looking, he stands alert, aggressive, and Napoleonically at ease. I saw him standing that way once, a year or so ago, before a New York judge's bench. He had been accused of assault on the complaint of a little-magazine editor who (Jones said) owed him money for a play. The editor had quickly cooled off and asked that the charges be dropped, a request the local cops and courts (who had been coveting a chance to impound Jones for some time) would have laughed at [illegible] made them [illegible] bringing the case to trial in the absence of plaintiff or witnesses, was out of the question. Jones was [illegible] the [illegible] repeatedly over the course of several months for meaningless hearings. I was present on one of these tedious occasions and saw Jones standing in the posture described above, beside his lawyer, [illegible] at the judge [illegible] gaze dripping with scorn. His Honor didn't like it.

"Counsellor, why is your man looking at me like that?" he demanded to know.

The Counsellor made placatory noises.

The judge turned on Jones. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Jones smiled. "Just want to *remember* you [illegible]," he said.

Reading accounts of Jones' equally provocative repartees with Judge Leon Karp at his trial in New Jersey last winter for possession of firearms during the Newark riot, some otherwise sympathetic whites have wondered why the black poet can't maintain a civil cool in such situations, thereby disarming the vendetta to which he has been subjected. It would be missing a big point about LeRoi Jones to conclude that his outbursts are [illegible] hot temper. Like almost everything else about him, from the way he looks to the [illegible] what he says, they are something like two parts emotion and three parts calculation. They are part of his new program [illegible] own advancement in opposition to [illegible] the old liberal and integrationist [illegible] Disobedience, Jones has substituted what might be called Civil Impudence (with the ultimate goal of Civil War), deliberately spitting in Whitey's eye, by which he means to be no less than the her[o] [illegible] black youth. [illegible] should be remembered that, as often as not, it is the megalomaniacs who make history.

That a sensitive, somewhat dandified poet whose works have often been so new as to be almost incomprehensible should now be in a position to "make history" is a sign of the times. Every black man in America during the last few years has been brought harshly up against the question of his blackness, of "Which side are you on?" This trial has broken the hearts of some. Martin Luther King, who short years ago seemed the prophet of an emerging era, [illegible] end of his life was stranded by the rising flood of events on an ever-narrowing m[illegible] and Others, like ex-convict Malcolm X and precocious Westchester schoolboy [illegible] Carmichael, were caught up by the sa[me] [illegible] and delivered, galvanized and transformed, on to the high ground of black leadership. Each of these cases is a story in itself and all will have to be told one day if we are ever to understand what has happened to us as a nation. LeRoi Jones, for his complexity, largeness of talent, and the drama of his experience, is a good place to start, though his story will have to be left only [illegible] incomplete. Chances are [illegible] the [illegible] be even more important.

Jones did not always know that historical prominence was what he wanted, but on his own [illegible] he always sensed that he was marked out for something big. Born October 7, 1934, on the genteel-shabby [illegible] outskirts of the Newark ghetto, son of a [illegible] and a social worker, he is, like most revolutionaries, a product of the middle class. In his own words, he was "the only middle-class champ running with the Hillside Place bads. I was saved from [illegible] by my parents' determination and the cool scholarship game which turns stone killers pure alabaster by graduation time." These two identifications, with the earthy "bad" ghetto blacks on the one hand and with the celestially white world of intellect and literature on the other, coexisted within him from his adolescence until sometime before his 30th birthday, when he set about to [illegible] his white part. At least [illegible] would have everyone believe. And, he being no less mysterious than any other man, it is probably as close to the truth as we are likely to come.

The stress of Jones' conflicted identity is a [illegible] theme in his works, especially in those [illegible] back on his boyhood and youth. H[is] [illegible] *The Toilet* could not be clearer, and we have every reason to believe that it is strictly [illegible] other of Jones' writings, and the hero's name is Ray (Jones' nickname is Roi), described in the cast notes as "short, intelligent, [illegible]." Ray is the acknowledged leader of a swaggering [illegible] school. The scene is the school lavatory [illegible] after hours. The gang is waiting for a white student, Karolis, to be dragged in. Karolis has made homosexual advances to Ray, and Ray is expected to repay him with a beating. But Ray is so torn between a sense of what is [illegible] of him as leader and a dangerous feeling of tenderness for Karolis that in the end he almost allows himself to be strangled by the [illegible] white boy. Then, after the gang members have interceded and stomped Karolis, Ray re-enters the [illegible] knee[ls] [illegible] and [illegible] head in his arms.

What kind of solicitude a Karolis could expect from Ray Roi these days is a moot question. Jones has since ostensibly disowned in himself that order of impulses that could lead to sympathy for a white man set upon by blacks. The drama of this [illegible] to surgery hangs like a cloud over his novel, *The System of Dante's Hell*, a mélange of lyrical expressionist riffs with snatches of statement and story [illegible]

young man, away from his "nigger" childhood toward "something better." "You've done everything you said you wouldn't" the first chapter begins. "Everything you said you despised." Using the structure of Dante's *Inferno* as a reference, Jones re-juggles it. Near the bottom, in the sixth circle, he locates the Heretics (to whom Dante was more considerate), explaining, "It is heresy, against one's own sources running in terror from one's deepest responses and insights: the denial of feeling... that I see as basest evil. A flower, turning from moisture and sun, would turn evil colors and die." This remarkable indictment is, in fact, a self condemnation. Jones regards himself as a half-pure, half-impure creation. He goes so far, in a recent poem, as to instruct future generations on how to make the proper discrimination:

When I die the consciousness I carry I will to
black people. May they pick me apart and take the
useful parts: the sweet meet of my feelings. And leave
the bitter bullshit rotten white parts
alone

Having graduated from high school in Newark, Jones breezed through Howard University, earning his B.A. at the age of 19. Then he joined the Air Force, for want of anything better to do. Stationed in the South and in Chicago, lonely and seething with frustration, he continued his literary education:

The air force was where I did all my reading, or a great deal of it. At least it was where I started coming on like a fullup intellectual, and got silent and cagey with most of the troops, and stayed in my room most nights piling through *Ulysses* or Eliot or something else like that. Sometimes writing shreds of literature myself, most times about things of which I had very little knowledge at all. Death or Eternity or Love or something like that, weeping sometimes at my fate, hitched like a common fool to an insufferable silent snob, a goose-mouthed nigger...both at the same time) to the air force of the united states

Journeying into himself, Jones seems at this time to have been equally alienated from both the white and black worlds. However, he had settled on literature as his calling, and literature is a white man's occupation. He emerged from the service a young man on the make, and made it, of course, to New York.

New York in the mid-50's was a ferment of artistic impulses and emerging life-styles: the Beats, Abstract Expressionism, jazz. It certainly offered the most genuinely inter-racial society in America, to the point where Jones' blackness was less of a hindrance to his ambitions than a positive prestige factor. A Negro who could write! That was something. There may, of course, have been a trace of self-congratulation in the acceptance of Jones by poets, painters, musicians, and patrons on the scene, but it did not occur to him at the time to really object. He even married a white girl, one Hettie Cohen from The Bronx, and indulged in affairs with others, having two kids in wedlock and at least one out (he continues to visit these children faithfully). He founded an influential and acerbic little magazine, *Yugen*, which became a vortex for some of the best writing, art, and wit on the avant-garde American scene. His strong, fast bop-Poundian poems began to appear regularly in most of the better journals of the trade. And his apartment on Eighth Avenue became a center of literary and social activity, a way station on the downtown action circuit, where one could find the likes of Allen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, Larry Rivers, Gilbert Sorrentino, *et al*.

He didn't say much in print at the time about how it felt to be a black expatriate in a nation of Bohemian whites, beyond poetic apostrophes such as this one, from his book *Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note*:

> Smiling and glad in
> the huge and loveless
> white-anglo sun/of
> benevolent step
> mother America

It was not until later, when, unsmiling and very unglad, he began to see America as anything but benevolent, that he became really valuable on the subject of his life among "esthetes, homosexuals, smart boys from Maryland." Having shed his white friends and white wife (replacing her eventually with a black one), having moved to Harlem and then back full circle, to the Newark ghetto, he began to view his former environment as a worthless if educational, interlude in his life: the period of his "heresy." "Having read all of Whitey's books," he announces in the preface to his book of essays, *Home*, "I wanted to be an authority on them. Having been taught that art was 'what white men did,' I almost became one, to have a go at it." Now having been saved for Negritude, having become a "black man living, surviving, being strong," Jones arrives at the conclusion that "the black man is weakened by any friend-contact with the morally weaker white element. Integration is assimilation and the permission to see the world suddenly through mealy-okay eyes."

To help us understand the real fullness of success Jones met with in this world, he sadly deplores a partial list of his achievements should suffice: a half-dozen published books, several successfully produced plays, the Obie Award for the best American play of the 1963-64 season (*Dutchman*, later released commercially as a movie), teaching posts at Columbia University and the New School for Social Research, Guggenheim and John Hay Whitney fellowships, and innumerable readings, reviews, lectures, interviews, profiles. Laying such wreaths as these at the altar of Black Revolution presumably won for Jones a big place in the hearts of his like-minded people, and certainly called down the irritation of many whites, netted to see their goodies so roughly discarded.

The reaction to all this of Jones' former friends in the "morally weaker white element" (those with whom he more or less intensely shared several years of his life) ranges from sympathy and support through indifference to hurt feelings and a slightly disgusted resignation. Says one painter who knew him when: "I saw LeRoi a few months ago in a bar and went over to say hello. So he gave me this great distant look and offered me a *gloved* hand to shake, all very calculating. I mean the hell with that, right?" There remains the lingering suspicion, however, that the good old Roi is still hiding out in there somewhere.

This may be, for all it matters. Except for a few fistfights in the 50's, and the aforementioned editor's charge that Jones took a swing at him, little in his past would indicate a personal taste for the kind of lethal violence he is accused of preaching (however murderous some of his polemics may seem). Nothing that is, except the two .32 pistols Newark police may or may not have found in his Volkswagen bus, pistols which in any case may or may not have belonged to him. The ugly beating it is pretty obvious Jones received at the hands of those same policemen puts a dubious light on the whole business, and supports the charge that the law has a very personal grudge against this poet. Now facing three years in jail, a sentence unblushingly based by Judge Karp in part on a certain poem published in the *Evergreen Review*, Jones is in a situation the ironic reverse of the one Western intellectuals are used to: his words are being taken more seriously than his deeds. Since this is the case, it would pay us to study those words carefully.

The poem that outraged Judge Karp is a frankly rousing invitation to black people to riot and loot. There is no denying the anarchic content of what the poem says, but one could easily overestimate it by losing track of the mocking humor in such lines as (to pick an especially scary example) "All the stores will open if you will say the magic words. The magic words are: Up against the wall mother-fucker this is a stick up!" And the indubitably "worst" line in the poem: "Take their lives if need be" does contain that ameliorating "if need be" indicating at least one small, hold-out of conscience in the midst of Total Revolution. It's not much, but there it is.

Moreover, it would be succumbing to paranoia to suppose that Jones sits all day in his Newark pad brooding on his hatred of whites. The real center of his thought is pro-black, for which anti-white is an adjunct but not a substitute. He envisions a rebirth of black culture and racial integrity, picking up, as it were, where these left off 400 years ago. "If we can bring back on ourselves the absolute pain our people must have felt when they came onto this shore," he says, with a sort of joyful grimness, "we are more ourselves again, and can begin to put history back on our menus." The baseline of this quest for a new (old) black identity is religious, a search for the Black God. Says Jones: "God is simply a white man, a white idea, in this society, unless we have made some other image which is stronger, and can deliver us from the salvation of our enemies." Jones himself has converted to Islam (though independently of the Black Muslims), viewing it as the modern religion closest to the African heritage and the one most able to restore the black man's masculine self-respect and sense of righteousness. Once a natty dresser, he now walks the streets in a *jellabah*.

The religious idea fits into Jones' theory of revolution as its corrective and source of justification. The meat of the theory is, however, and curiously enough, good old Western European historical dialectic with a really vicious parochial slant. Addressing the white man, Jones declares: "We were here before you got here, and we'll be here after you're gone," which, to me, is at best a brief, unhappy interlude." He assumes the inevitability of black (and yellow) ascendance over the "crumbling white structure," and implicitly believes that whites will go down simply because, though a majority in the West, they are a minority in the world. The colored man, he says, is "a species that is evolving to world power and philosophical domination of the world" (whatever *that* means). In the coils of this tortuous reasoning he can also come up with gems of paradox not so much visionary as plain weird: *e.g.* "The white *man* at this point in history, is the major obstruction in the path of *man*'s progress." (Flames in hell.) The nifty equation in that sentence of "man" with "black man," is positively Orwellian. And if you catch disquieting echoes in all this of Fascist racial rhetoric, the Germans thought they were destiny's darling 'species,' too—you are probably right. We are dealing in both cases with messianic nationalism mated to racism. Black Power, having to invent a nation to be nationalistic about, is in a more ambiguous position than Germany was, but Jones' little farragoes on 'man' indicate that the dehumanizing, racist part is already well along. And, however authentic his feelings and however deep his personal humanity, Jones cannot deny (and perhaps at this point may not even care to deny) that many of his statements are invitations to a genocide.

So where in this ideological thicket is LeRoi Jones, the person? LeRoi Jones the poet and playwright seems more and more to be the thicket wired for sound. His poems, once the chronicles of private events, now are pronunciamentos of a collective consciousness being born. It would be simple to say that they are inferior, but, happily or unhappily, they are absolutely his best work: crisp, funny, subtle, and exploding with energy. As for their power to move as well as please, we have Judge Karp's expert critique of that. Jones' plays, from all reports (the theater of Spirit House in Newark where they are mostly performed) is closed to whites, are strident and uproarious masques, projecting a bitter-comic image of the black man as a victim and slayer, of whites. Then there is LeRoi Jones the social and political man, operating in the obscurity of the ghettos. From all reports, again, he lobbies nonstop for his views and for the militant unity of his people, formally, in public and clandestine organizations, informally, to anyone within earshot.

A white poet who knows him remarks that Jones looks more like Jomo Kenyatta every day. And maybe this is as good a summary as any of what has been happening to his "personality," if he can be said to have one. It could be, in the end, that at Jones' core is merely a confusion of mismatched desires and fears, kept in tense equilibrium by a raging will to excel. Thus he has always functioned best at the exact center of whatever he has been involved in. Perhaps he has simply moved, on the tide of events, from centrality in the difficult, marginal community of avant-garde literature to centrality in the grand arena of contemporary history, choosing or discarding pieces of himself along the way, *molding* himself to fit his new role, covering his tracks with dialectical justifications. Kenyatta, it will be remembered, effected a seemingly miraculous (to Western eyes) metamorphosis from Mau-Mau terrorist to Great Statesman. Maybe this is an age of such miracles. The Roi his white friends knew is somehow unconscionably, all but vanished from the Earth, the LeRoi of the ghettos is still evolving. What's next? Well, would you believe the Emperor Jones?

No one can say where all this is going to end, or which aspect of Jones' position, its promise, or its threat, will become most prominent. Certainly three years in jail, if that outrageous sentence is let stand, will do nothing to mellow him. But of course everything depends on what course the Black Revolution continues to take, whether through a steady escalation of bloodshed or toward an eventual détente. Then, too, given his talent for making enemies, Jones, like Malcolm X, may well not end his life in bed, thus having his work transformed into that most unwieldy of things, a martyr's testament. That would be a waste and a tragedy on many levels. For one thing, we would never learn the full personal meaning of his remarkable conversions, nor whether externalizing "the inferno of [his] frustration" actually got him, finally, out of hell.

THE STRANGE WORLD OF GEORGE TOOKER

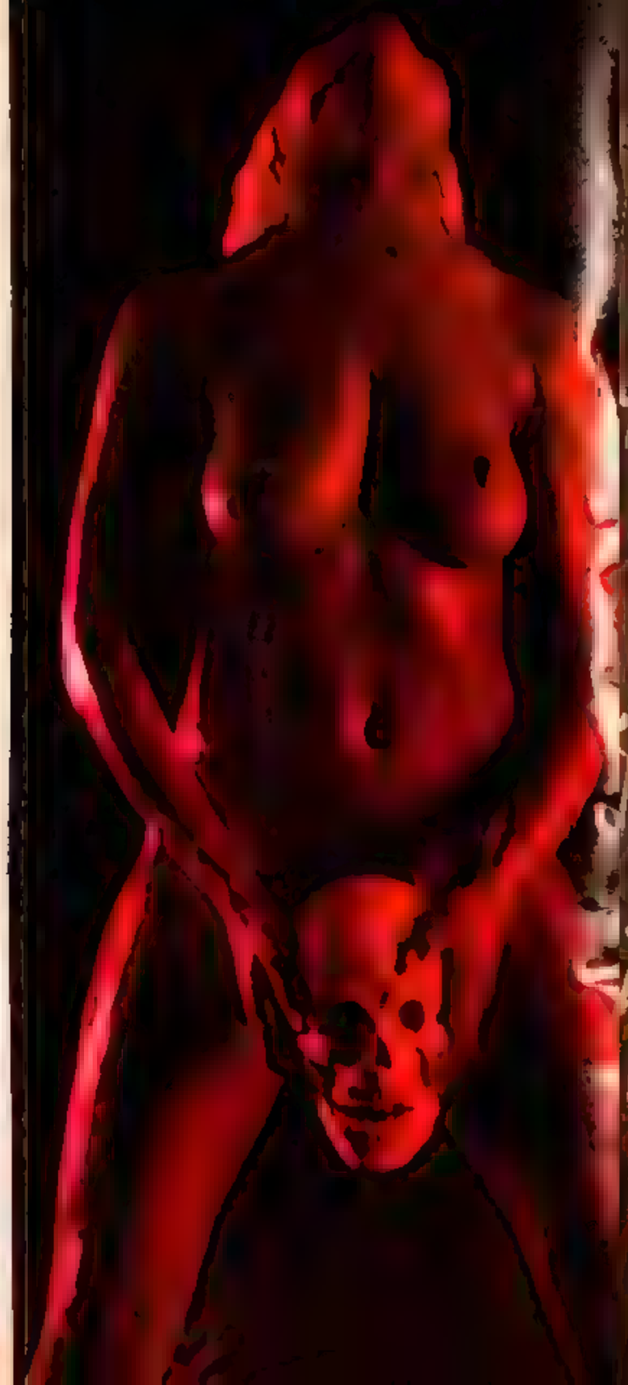
George Tooker's paintings are strange the way a rock is hard and fire is hot. They are from the inside out and in every detail, strange. They are strange without, however, exhibiting the kind of extravagant weirdness one usually associates with the "Magic Realists," in whose ranks Tooker is generally numbered. Tooker's work is calmer and (though it communicates a frightful insecurity) more sure of itself than that. His very medium bespeaks an assurance born of almost uncanny accommodations—the medium of Early Italian painting, egg tempera on gesso panels. His style, too, harkens back to the severe graces of 15th-Century Florentines like Botticelli and Lippi (as evidenced in his self-portrait on the opposite page). But his subjects have nothing to do with the Madonnas and Primaveras of that earlier (happier?) era: they are the stuff of today's tortured urban world, its endless corridors and empty eyes composed with a kind of quiet, almost lyrical horror. With perfect tact and economy these paintings mark one extreme of the modern sensibility—the alienated man who cannot take his eyes off the source of his alienation, but must obsessively regard it with a stare so intense that it draws blood

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION

VOODOO LIVES!

Many people probably think Voodoo is something [illegible] natural trends [illegible] these straight by stern [illegible] however what with the resurgence in American of African [illegible] and traditions the average is [illegible] starting to [illegible] slowly that [illegible] the mysteries of the and [illegible] churches a message [illegible] from [illegible] and power. A [illegible] and this [illegible] Obeah [illegible] abandonment to [illegible]

VOODOO LIVES!



Arthur Miller

Please Don't Kill Anything

That beach was golden toward sundown. The bathers had all gone home when the wind got brisk. Gulls were diving just beyond the breakers. On the horizon they could see four stubby fishing boats moving in a line. Then she turned toward the right and saw the two parked trucks and the fishermen hauling on a net.

"Let's see if they caught anything," she said, with the swift surge of wonder that swept through her at any new sight.

The trucks were battered and rusty with open backs and the one they came upon had about 25 big, sand-sprinkled bass and small bluefish piled at the tailgate. A man in his sixties was sitting on the truck holding a rope which was wound around a winch at his side. He nodded to them pleasantly and drew on the rope to keep it wound tightly around the turning winch.

Sam glanced at the fish as they arrived at the truck and knew she would be startled. She saw them and her eyes widened but she even tried to smile in congratulation to the old man who drew on the rope, and she said, "You catch all these?"

"Yup," he said, and his eyes warmed at her beauty.

"These are all dead, aren't they?"

"Oh, ya," the old man said.

She had an excitement in her eyes as she looked, it seemed at each individual fish to be sure it wasn't moving. Sam started talking to the old man about the probability of a good catch in the net now coming into shore, and she was drawn into the conversation and he was relieved that her eyes, the color of the blue sea, were calmed.

"Why do you pull so fast?" Sam asked the old man. "Are they fighting the net?"

"Naw," the old man said, "just want to keep her taut so they mightn't jump over and get away."

The waves were breaking into the net now but they could not yet see any fish. She put her two hands up to her cheeks and said, "Oh, now they know they're caught!" She laughed. "Each one is wondering what happened." He was glad she was making fun of herself even if her eyes were fixed in fear on the submerged net.

"They'll sell them to the fish stores," he said softly, so the old man at the winch wouldn't hear. "They'll feed people."

"Yes," she said, like a child reassured. "I'll watch it. I'm watching it," she almost announced to him. But in her something was holding its breath.

A wave receded then, and with one pull the bag of the net was drawn out of the surf. Voices sounded from both trucks. It wasn't much of a catch. She saw the tails of small bluefish writhing up through the net ("it's standing on its head!"), and a great bass flopping and sea robins trying to stretch their curved amber wings and one flounder lying in the midst of this tangled rubble of the sea. She kept pointing here and there at a fish that had suddenly jerked or flopped over and cried out, "There's one! There's another one!" Meaning they were not dead yet, and he knew must be rescued.

The men opened the net and pulled out the bass and some bluefish, tossing the sea robins and the flounder onto the sand and two blowfish, which immediately began to swell. She turned to the old man on the truck and trying to smile, she called to him with a sharpness in her voice, almost a cry. "Don't you take those?"

He drew an old man's warmth from the glow of her face and the startling shape of her body under the striped jersey and the beige slacks. "They're no good, ma'am," he said.

"Well, don't you put them back?"

The old man seemed to hesitate as though some memory of guilt had crossed his mind. "Sure. We put them back," and sat watching his partner who was picking good fish out of the net and tossing the wriggled fish right and left onto the sand.

There were now 50 sea robins on the beach, some of them gulping, some perfectly still. Sam could feel the tension rising in her and he walked over to the nearest fish and, feeling a tremor of repugnance, picked it up and threw it into the waves and came back to her. The pulse of its life was still in his fingers. "If I had something to hold them with..."

"You can't throw all those fish back," he said to her, knowing the old man on the truck was being astonished even now that he had thrown back one.

"But they're alive!" she said desperately, trying to smile and not to separate herself from him.

"No, they're dead. Most of them are dead. Sweet."

"Would they live again if they had water?"

"Oh, sure, they come to," he said, trying to assuage her, but not moving from his place.

She took off her sandal and went to a fish which was writhing and tried to flip it into the water, but it slipped away. Sam came over, picked it up, and flung it into the sea. He was laughing now and she kept saying, "I'm sorry. But if they're alive..."

"It's all right," he said, "but they're mostly dead by now. Look." And he picked up one that was motionless, felt flabby. He threw it into the water and it arched itself as it struck and she cried out, "There! It's swimming."

Defeated and grinning, now that he saw the fishermen watching him with smiles on their faces, he went about throwing all the sea robins back into the water. He sensed that even with their smiles the men were somehow held by her insistence, and as he threw the slippery fish in one by one he saw each fish separately, each straining for its quart of sea, and he was no longer ashamed. And there were two fish left, both sea robins with white bellies and stiff umber wings and the beginnings of legs sprouting from both sides of their necks. They were motionless on their backs. He did not bend to pick them up because she seemed prepared to sacrifice them and he went back to her, feeling somehow, that if he let those two die on the beach she might come to terms with this kind of waste. For he had had to open the window at home, once, to let out a moth which ordinarily he would have swatted, and while part of his heart worshiped her fierce tenderness toward all that lived, another part knew that she must come to understand that she did not die with the moths and the spiders and the fledgling birds and now with these fish. But it was also that he wished the fishermen to see that she was not quite so fanatic as to require these two last, obviously dead, sea robins to be given their chance.

He stood beside her again, waiting. He smiled and said, "You got a job cut out for yourself. There's 25 miles of beach we can cruise, throwing back fish." She laughed and drew his head down and kissed him and he hugged her and she said, "Just those two. Go on, Sam. They might be alive."

He laughed again and picked up one of the fish, knowing that it was even more unjust for two to die when 50 had been saved, and as he tossed it to the waves a dog appeared. It was a big, brown retriever with sea-matted hair and it leaped into the waves and dipped its head into the water, raised up with the sea robin gently cradled in its mouth, and came back with great pride to lay it carefully at Sam's feet. [illegible] he brings it back. Sam said, "[illegible] dear!" she laughed, and bent toward the stern face of the buff-eyed dog. The dog returned her a look of athletic determination. "You mustn't do that!" Helplessly she looked at Sam, who picked up the fish and threw it back. Again the dog leaped in and retrieved and now with enormous brain and pride nearly danced back [illegible] feet and stood waiting for the next throw, its eyes fixed on the fish, trembling with eagerness.

We [illegible] whose [illegible] This guy was trained to help [illegible] man has to eat and something's got to [illegible]."

As he spoke a silvery minnow slid out of the mouth of the sea robin at his feet.

"Look at that now," he yelled. "See? What about *that* little fish?"

Yes, she did like [illegible]

You see. The [illegible]

Well, hurry the [illegible] back [illegible] way.

But [illegible] character keeps bringing him back. This fish is doomed, he said, and they were both laughing but she had [illegible] head a clock which was telling her [illegible] every second counted, and she started to bend toward the fish at his feet despite her repugnance at touching it. He moved her hand away and picked it up, threw it, and when the dog turned and went into the water for it he ran a few yards along the beach to the other fish and threw it in.

Now," he said, a little breathlessly, as the dog returned with the first fish, "now there's one. This is a positively doomed fish on the principle that man has to eat and this dog's part of the scheme to feed him. But now even he could not take his eyes from the fish which had taken to breathing rapidly, what with the shocks of being thrown into the water and being picked up by the dog and flying through the brisk wind. This fish wishes you'd let him die in peace." He laughed.

She looked around almost frantically, still smiling and laughing with him and saw a stick and ran [illegible] with the dancer's leaping stride and the dog glanced at her, then watched her as she waved the stick and called to him. She threw it into the sea and the dog streaked into the water after it and Sam picked up the last fish quickly and flung it and it arched with [illegible] as it sank into a wave.

The beach was now clean and the fishermen were busy stowing their [illegible] and the two walked away toward the road. "I'm sorry, Sam, but they were alive, and if nobody's going to eat them..."

Well, the tide would have taken them out, dead. Puss, and they'd have been eaten by other fish. They wouldn't have been wasted.

"Yes," she said. They walked holding each other by the hand and she was silent. He felt a great happiness opening in himself that she had laid his hand on the fish which were now swimming in the sea because he had freed them. Now she looked up at him like a little girl, with [illegible] and she said, "But some of them might live now, till they're old."

"And then they'll die," he said.

But at least they'll live as long as they can," and she laughed with the woman's part of her that knew of absurdities.

"That's right," he said, "they'll live to a ripe old age, and grow prosperous and dignified."

She burst out laughing. "And see their children grown up."

He kissed her on her lips, blessing her and her wish. "Oh, how I love you," she said with tears in her eyes.

Then they walked home.

THE BALLAD OF PETER PAUL

A YOUNG HAWK TELLS WHY HE QUIT COLLEGE TO SLAUGHTER IN VIETNAM

It is perhaps the tragedy of the human world that man cannot kill and kill and kill yet never learn. This young spring graduate was educated by his farmer father to fear safety more than war and to prefer heroic and imagined glories of war if he were certain that in the end [illegible] never bored [illegible] repeated [illegible] was [illegible] or [illegible]

I'm on leave as I write this. It will be my last leave before going to Nam. By the time this is published, I shall be in modern America's happy hunting ground. I've passed through basic and advanced infantry training, plus three weeks of jump school. This leave has the urgency of mortality about it, and most of my time has been spent hailing in order to farewell. But my leave before this one, which occurred after basic, was different, particularly the last night, and I'll start off with that.

My family lives on Long Island, and I went to see a good friend, Harvey Jacobs, who lives in Manhattan. I was dressed in all my military splendor—uniform, badges, ribbon. I wore it for the hell of it, and to see the expression on Harvey's face. He was noncommittal, and merely inquired whether I felt like a Terrible Swift Sword yet. He invited me to a press party a friend of his was giving to introduce some recording groups he owned. We went to a place called Channel One, a sort of hippie night spot, lurking near the Bowery. A girl grew in the lobby, her bare feet sunk like roots into the ratty red carpet. When we walked in she was passing out flowers, like a momma honeybee proud of her pollination. The honeybee absently pushed a flower at Harvey and was preparing to shove one at me when she noticed my uniform. She stared from Harvey to me to the flower and back to Harvey again. Harvey shrugged. I grinned.

"Uh," she said.

"Um?" I grinned.

There was a momentary silence as the real import of the situation beamed on to her. Then she took the plunge.

Here," she half-screamed, consuming the daisy to its stem and stepping back, presumably waiting for it to wilt.

Thanks," I said, but more to the daisy than to her. Although shocked that contact with the military hadn't instantly demolished her flower, the girl managed to point shakily towards some stairs and murmur that our party was "up there."

It was interesting up there. It looked, as Harvey said, like an overused Polish ballroom. There were grimy chandeliers and the floor was naked board. There was no stage, only a couple of forlorn-looking microphones and a big white wall that the musicians played in front of. The room moreover was filled with as colorful a set of stereotype hippies and hangers-on as would send an Indiana tourist into ecstasy. Archer was a freak. It may just be me, but I find that all hippies look alike. Not that I have anything against hippies, why some of my best friends are hippies. I simply can't identify them sexually or physically and only occasionally, mentally. It is a problem I have.

My uniform and I didn't create an uproar or anything, they didn't try to beat me to death with rosebuds, but as I said, "vech" permeated the room. Most of them were confused, thinking I was a put-on who had put on too much. Others thought I was demonstrating against something and one guy(?) nearly had an orgasm each time I lit a cigarette, apparently believing that I intended to burn my uniform and/or myself in protest against the Burning Issue (whatever that was. I'd been out of touch.) Harvey and I sat down on a couple of the metal folding chairs we found in the room and listened to a self-consciously African Negro group cannibalize their instruments. Harvey decided to leave, but I decided to stay on out of curiosity.

During a break, while most everyone cleared out to attack the food, a few [illegible] convinced souls attempted to draw me [illegible] the path of enlightenment. By nature I hate being dragged anywhere and I threw snotty replies all over the place. There were three of them, all girls (I could see their breasts—nice boobs). The first advanced on me with the bit in her teeth, her mouth foaming almost.

"You're in the army," she snarled.

"Yes." I smiled sweetly, sugar pouring from between the cracks in my teeth. "I've always wanted to kill people, you know—maim, burn, rape and pillage."

"You're horrible," she whispered and fled, pupils dilated.

The next girl was very suave, very cool, the academic-interest type. "Ah," she said, knowingly. "They drafted you."

"No," I said decisively. "I enlisted."

"Good God! Why?" But she didn't wait for an answer. "You support the war then?"

"The war?"

"Ye."

I looked at her blankly.

"Vietnam."

"Yeah, I guess I support that. I'll be where I'll be fighting, I guess."

"What do you mean by that?" Confused.

"Oh, just that if the United States was involved in naked aggression upon El Salvador I'd still be willing to support it."

"My country right or wrong," she clucked. "That's insane."

"Yeah," I agreed. "That is, frankly, I couldn't give much of a damn what country I'm fighting for, either."

She looked at me coldly. "You're disgusting," she said.

"No," I said truthfully. "I don't think I am." But she had already started to walk away.

The last of the three girls came over to me and was very beautiful.

"You're a soldier. Are you going to Vietnam?"

I nodded.

"When?"

[illegible]

"Why?"

"Lots of reasons."

"Give one."

"Never been there before."

"That's not the real reason."

"No, but it's one of them. You only [illegible] to one."

She mulled it over and must have decided that I wasn't going to tell her the Real Reason I was going to Vietnam. "I think you're doing a terribly wrong thing."

"Going to war?"

"Yes. Killing other people and yourself, too, maybe."

"No, that's not a wrong thing I'm doing, that's a right thing."

"War is evil."

"How do you know?"

"I feel that it is."

"I don't."

"You must [illegible]."

"I don't, anywhere."

She stopped for a moment, unconvinced, sure that she could save this soul from eternal damnation. "War hurts people. It kills them. People should love one another."

"Why?"

"No pain, no fear, no hurt..."

"No life." I cut in.

"Love is blue."

"Love is bullshit."

"If you can say that, you've never loved anyone. I pity you."

"If you can say that, you've never hated anyone. I pity you."

"You never convince me you're right. I know and feel and believe that it's wrong."

I don't much care to convince you of anything. I don't have to. I don't need your assent to do what I soon shall be doing, and you're impotent to stop me anyway. Here I stand, the killer mercenary antichrist, the Bully Weed among the Flower Children, the very antithesis of everything you believe. In fact, according to your beliefs, a person like me [illegible] doesn't exist. Nevertheless, as you universal Love can't stop what I am a part of and what I am going to do. How does that grab you?

"You're wrong. You can be stopped. Perhaps [illegible] sometime they will learn to love. You can be stopped."

"You're wrong, girl. One weed can kill all the flowers and there will always be at least one of me. And, in fact, that's the only way I can be stopped: with another me. There's your answer. Kill me now, quick, before I squeeze the sap right out of your flowers." As I'd hoped, there wasn't much she could say in the face of all that. (To her mind) irrationality so she grinned wistfully (being that kind of wistful chick) and glided away.

Oh I was in fine rare form. I've only given you parts of it. Later on a rock band came on and serenaded me with antiwar songs (burning babies, mangled ladies, gutted buildings, etc.). I smiled stoutly until they gave up. I was drunk on the irony of my "alienation" in that herd of loners, my uniformed nonconformity. It was a charge to put a switch on the hippies whom I'd seen blow straight minds all to hell and gone. It was a kick, and I freely admit it, but there was much truth in the words I said that night, the seeds of which are sprung from the soil of things I've done and seen and thought throughout my conscious years. Stay tuned for some biography.

I started thinking around the age of 12, emerging abruptly from the fuzzy pink and action world of a child. I began to look at and examine the wonders of the world and existence. I decided it all wasn't so wonderful. In fact, I didn't care for it at all. I didn't dig the suburban life, nor the suburban school, nor my suburban parents. I hated it, in fact, and fought it. I rebelled, but not in causes, not in a group, but somewhat inconspicuously and only when I was affected directly. I never fought the general fact of authority, the whole big hand of it. I only bit and chewed at the fingers of it. Mainly, I couldn't care less about situations which restricted others' freedom but left mine alone. I never thought of marching anywhere for anybody. But let one restraining hand be laid on me in any form I disliked and I'd go berserk. I was stubborn, contemptuous, spoiled, and angry. Throughout my first three years of high school I defined and defied everything about the world I didn't like. The list was very long. Finally, I cut out.

It was my first positive act and a crucial one. I'd had it with the suburban brat. I wanted none of it. I felt I had to cut out for a while and decide if there was any thing going on in the world that interested me enough to provide an excuse to stay alive. I had never had any illusions that there was any Universal out there something that as soon as the human race discovered what it was, we could all get in line to. There were no isms for me, no ologies. I could never be an artist. Ultimately nothing meant anything; the belief didn't disappoint me or frustrate me or demoralize me (as I've seen it do to others, most of whom stubbornly keep looking). I rather liked the idea of meaninglessness. It energized my freedom, meant everything was clay that if I wanted to, I could create my own rules and values and act on them. What hung me up though, was that while I had discarded most of the old rules, I couldn't find anything to replace them. I thought I'd better find something to keep me alive because there didn't seem much point in hanging around playing the life-game without any interest in the outcome. Somewhere in between running away, getting caught, and getting shipped home, I found—made up, really—a few answers.

Writing. I liked that. I could do it alone, it was a good excuse to stay away from people, and I wondered if I could manage it. Sex. I definitely wanted to check that out. Work. I'd done nothing for years, rested supine on my parents' money. I wanted to see if I could make it without them. War. That I come to.

After protracted pleading from my parents, I agreed to finish high school but college was out of the question. I wrote a book, of sorts, during the last six months of my senior year which if nothing else was an accurate and honest description of the kind of world I'd lived in and which was beginning to send so many kids off the wall and on to drugs.

When school was over, I got a job selling (among other things) ambulance chasers, and I rented a nice hovel in Brooklyn where no one could hear me much less bother me. I wrote at night, began to learn from it, and generally had a hell of a good time with myself. But then came an idea for another book, and that pulled me out of Brooklyn back home and into (of all things) college. The book was about war.

War has excited me ever since I received my first set of stubby rubber cowboys and Indians. From the start, the idea of war struck me as amazing. Man bending all his skills and energies to destruction—actually going out and dying for something. Amazing! I got a great big charge out of it mentally and emotionally.

In school I'd started collecting toy soldiers made in Germany. Counting all the figurines of Romans, Carthaginians, Persians, Greeks—all fleeing, advancing, hacking, slaying, slain. The two-dimensional figures—flats, as they are called—are incredibly attractive even to the skeptic. One day I began thinking about the hold they had over me, the almost sinister kick I got out of maneuvering thousands of tin soldiers on a ping-pong table. The more I thought about it, the more I began to wonder if I was alone in being susceptible to this kind of involvement. After reading a few newspapers and watching a few football games, I decided I wasn't. From this was sprung my book, *The Games*.

It is written as the diary of Wuham Lear, a man who, in spite of a studied detestation of violence, becomes involved in a miniature war of tin soldiers. His opponent is half-senile mad Amos Sabal the enticer, owner of the Gamesroom and all its soldiers, maps, mountains, towns, and machinery. Lear ships gradually into the embrace of the Games, fighting out battles in the land of Arteterra. There are monumental defeats and splendid victories throughout the book.

Of course much has been left out. The book took two years to complete. In order to make what I wanted out of the book I had to fight each battle map each campaign exactly as Lear and Sabal did. By the time I'd finished I had almost a thousand maps and battle sketches. That was why I had to come home and go to college. I needed [illegible] use the ping-pong table downstairs to fight the battles on. Also I didn't want to be drafted before I finished the book. It's as good an excuse as any to go to college. I found college little more than an ivy-lined womb in which thousands of frightened people sought shelter. After I'd finished the book, I couldn't get out soon enough.

It was at this time that I joined the Merchant Marine and sailed to the West Indies, Europe and Southern Africa. I learned a great deal more during those trips than in all the time I ever spent at school. Among other things, I found out about sex. (It's a hell of a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there. A whore from Mozambique broke me in and removed a general sheen of hornyness that had plagued me for 19 years. She also cleared up most of my virginal hangups. I was lucky, it was an altogether good type of thing.)

When I finished *The Games*, I found myself in a vacuum. I no longer felt like writing, carrying on the school charade or picking up some dull type of job. But I knew what to do about it. I'd always known, right back to the rubber cowboys and Indians. The minute I stepped off the *African Neptune* after two months at sea I think I realized that what I wanted to do had nothing in common with being a civilian. I hung on to finish the second draft of *The Games*. Then on June 19, 1967, I took the oath, volunteering for airborne infantry and Vietnam.

Obviously, curiosity was a major reason for my enlistment. But let me say now that it was not a cool curiosity. It was a red-hot, go-out-and-get-'em kind of thing. I was really excited to go to Vietnam. Patriotism formed a small part of the reason. The actual entanglement in Vietnam, our reasons for being there, bore me. Frankly, I don't care and am completely indifferent to "moral" questions involved in this war, particularly since I regard war itself as amoral, completely unanswerable to any sort of ethic or code. I am not enthused over the Vietnam War but it is the place where I can go and kill people and they me. There's a cadence we marched to during basic: "I wanna go to Viet-nam, I wanna kill a Charlie Cong." So far as I care the cadence could [illegible] "I wanna go to [illegible] wanna kill [illegible]." Fill in the blank. I go for the personal experience of it, to see how I will react, how others will, if the ideas I arrived at while writing *The Games* were (personally) correct, an short-term [illegible] the knowledge of my [illegible] elementary and as universal as sex.

Railing against war makes as much sense to me as a man screaming in reproach of his own testicles. War is a fact. I believe it is as much a part of man as sex. Creation and destruction are sprung from the same pod and grow [illegible] tree. Man. No war would be like no sex. An affront to one's self, a gouging out of the eyes because the color of daylight displeases.

The persistence of human violence right down to the neighborhood fistfight leads me to doubt the condemnation of war more than the phenomenon itself. Here is a thing which has always happened, which is happening so regularly, so naturally and always so intensely, yet people still refuse to consider it part of human nature. It may be that at some time man will lose all his aggressiveness, step off all his clothes, and spend his days dragging pot and sucking his finger in his navel. The day of Hippie Heaven and Universal Love may come, but when they do, man will no longer be man but something else.

About the time you are reading this I will be either dead or mangled in Nam, or alive, shedding my illusions—indeed finding out if I still have any. It's the only way. For the many who stay behind, having no doubt found some substitute for experience (such as reading up on it, speaking to somebody who was there, etc.), to you, dear people, I promise this: If and when I come back, shouldn't you bystanders try to tell me anything about war or Vietnam or killing. I plan to look at you with all the contempt I can muster and sneer truly sneer. "How the hell do *you* know? You had your chance to find out, *really find out*, and you didn't take it."

I REMEMBER SUPERMAN

AN AMERICAN TOURIST RECALLS THE ASTONISHING COMMAND PERFORMANCE OF A HAVANA BROTHEL SUPERSTAR

BY FRANCESCA MILANI

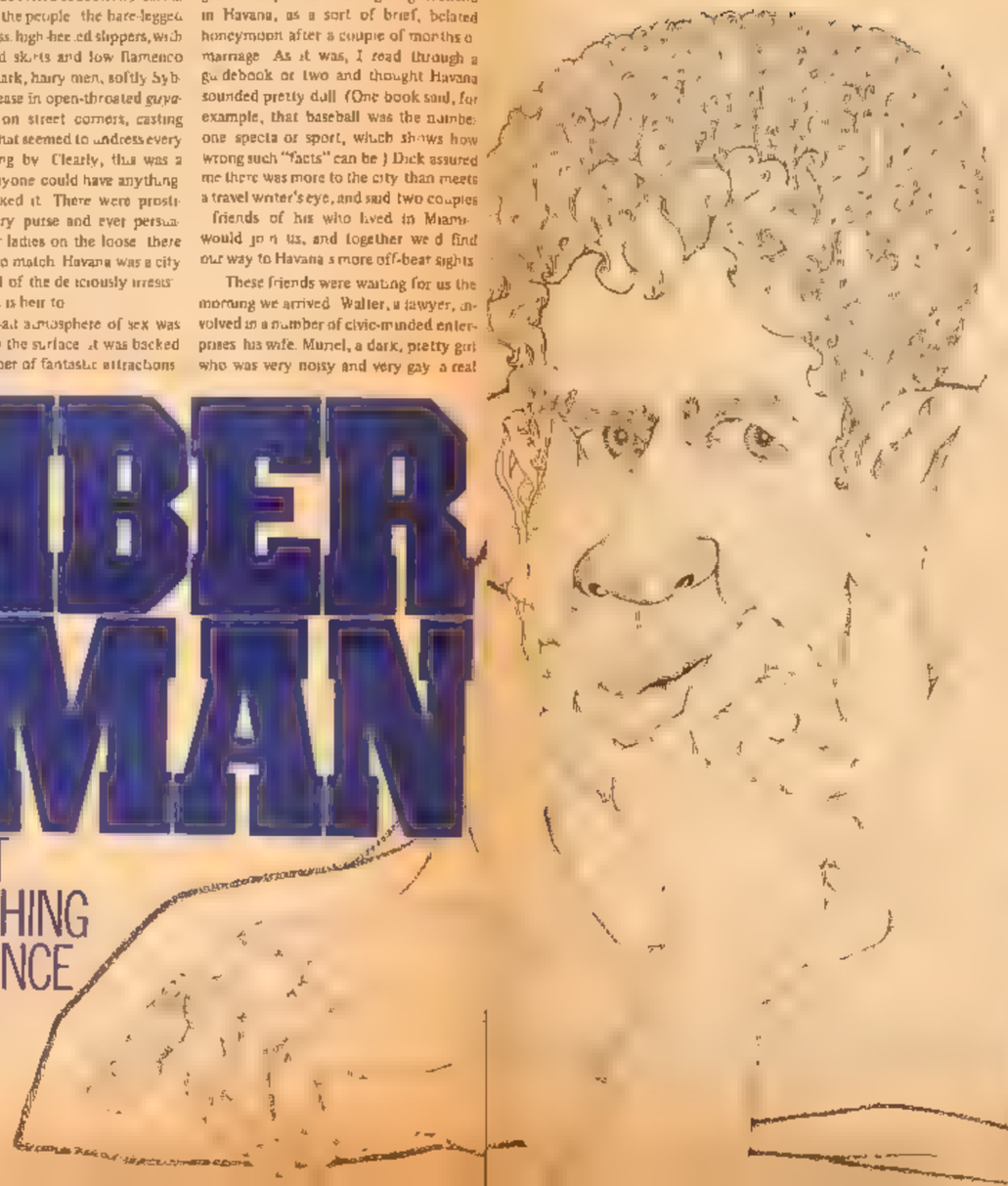
To most people, the name Superman brings to mind the alter ego of comic strip hero Clark Kent. To me, the name will always bring back memories of a six-foot-eight Haitian Negro with a 24-inch penis the star performer in a sex exhibition I saw in Havana 12 years ago.

This Superman was, in fact, the sexiest attraction in what was (and still may be) the world's sexiest city. In the Havana air, sex hung thick as Spanish moss. It crackled in the atmosphere like so much static electricity. It was a feeling caused partly by the tropical-siesta languor of the place, partly by the double intoxication of rum and rhumba rhythms, the suggestive music of guitars and whispering maracas floating out of every thatched-front bar and from behind every bamboo blind. There was an aura of assignation and license whether you walked the narrow cobblestone streets of the native quarter or loitered in the luxurious confines of the Hotel Nacional, a place of fountains and Spanish tiles and cool, dark, silent walks that made you think there were lovers behind every louvered door. There was even a seductively casual quality about the people: the bare-legged girls in backless, high-heeled slippers, with tight, ruffled skirts and low flamenco blouses, the dark, hairy men, softly Sybaritic and at ease in open-throated *guayaberas*, idling on street corners, casting slow glances that seemed to undress every woman passing by. Clearly, this was a city where anyone could have anything anyway he liked it. There were prostitutes for every purse and every persuasion, and for ladies on the loose there were gigolos to match. Havana was a city devoted to all of the deliciously irresistible sin's flesh is heir to.

Thus overall atmosphere of sex was not merely on the surface. It was backed up by a number of fantastic attractions the likes of which are never mentioned in guidebooks. Had I known about these beforehand, I would have been more enthusiastic when Dick, my husband, suggested we spend a Thanksgiving weekend in Havana, as a sort of brief, belated honeymoon after a couple of months of marriage. As it was, I read through a guidebook or two and thought Havana sounded pretty dull. (One book said, for example, that baseball was the number one spectator sport, which shows how wrong such "facts" can be.) Dick assured me there was more to the city than meets a travel writer's eye, and said two couples friends of his who lived in Miami would join us, and together we'd find our way to Havana's more off-beat sights.

These friends were waiting for us the morning we arrived. Walter, a lawyer, involved in a number of civic-minded enterprises; his wife, Muriel, a dark, pretty girl who was very noisy and very gay; a real estate speculator, Dave, and his wife Gloria, a cherubic blonde whose hair had been bleached until it looked like pale cotton candy. I joined the women at the edge of the hotel pool and Muriel said what she really needed was a good tan, though her skin already looked as though it had been glazed with iodine. Meanwhile the men went off to confer with bellboys, barbers and bartenders in hopes of leading us to the city's exotic night life. They returned, thoroughly pleased with themselves, said the evening was all planned and told us to dress simply and inconspicuously.

We all met at the hotel bar at about five, Gloria and Muriel camouflaged in clouds of white cashmere and pink fox. We had some drinks and when we had a pleasant glow on the tour began with a walk through the city's most blatant red light district. The streets were lined with rows of one-room houses, each with an open window that had bars on it, behind which sat a girl merchandise on display so shoppers could browse, compare, and bargain before making their choices. A few shutters were closed on back of the bars, indicating [illegible] at that moment being served. Girls at the open windows called to Dick, Dave and Walter inviting them to sample their wares, completely oblivious to our presence and in fact one almost had the feeling any number could play and that we ladies would be more than welcome if we decided to join in. Next, we spent a few minutes in the private museum of Juan Sierra, a sculptor specializing in erotic statuary and who, the thought you were *sympatico*, would invite you to join his secret love cult. The initiation, he explained, required you to take off your clothes and spend the night with him, his wife and their five German Shepherds.



We were getting hungry by now so we left for dinner a marvelous Cuban country meal served in a tiny room with three tables in back of a filthy little grocery store, the *Bodegita del Medio*. As we ate black beans and rice, roast pork, and avocado with red onions three sleepy musicians seated at the third table strummed their guitars, lazily but expertly and hummed provocative Cuban love songs. After dinner we went to one of the native night clubs tucked away in the alleys of the old town—a noisy, smoky room with pink neon lights swirling above the bandstand and out over the floor, where dancers could hardly tell whose hips and backsides they snaked against as they did the more uncommon versions of the rhumba and the mambo—eyes half-closed, heads tipped back, pelvises grinding together. The floor show was a mass kaleidoscopic striptease.

At midnight we went to the Shanghai Theater, a movie house where the late show consisted of the sort of films usually shown at men's smokers. The feature attraction, the night we were there, had 14 players in the cast—male, female, white, black, and yellow, and end-to-end in a writhing, convulsive dusky chain that would have warmed the cockles of De Sade's heart. (I heard recently that the Shanghai held a prominent role in Cuban history, for when President Gerardo Machado was faced with insurrection—one of his tactics in putting it down was offering all men free admission to the pornographic movies at this theater.)

It was pretty late by the time we got out of the theater and Dick said we would have to choose between two sights. The first was a whorehouse where the customers were, unknowingly, performers, observed through one-way glass by paying spectators. Each voyeur watched six couples simultaneously, and, in best pari-mutuel fashion, placed bets as to which man would have an orgasm first. The alternate sight was Superman, a personality Dick described as having a fabled prowess and the largest known penis in the world. Because it was my honeymoon, everyone thought I should make the choice. Somehow, the Superman performance had a certain simple eloquence about it that appealed to me instantly. Then, too, I hate three-ring circuses. I'm always afraid I'll watch the wrong spectacle. And as I considered gambling on Superman anyway, I chose Superman. Nothing I have seen of the world since has given me cause to regret that decision.

We got into a cab, Dick said "Superman," and the driver took off with no more to-do than if we had been in New York asking for Times Square. After about 20 minutes we found ourselves in a seedy residential district close to the waterfront. We walked over to the unlit doorway the driver indicated and knocked. The door was opened by the madam, a flower of evil with henna hair, a starch-white face, garnet rouge, a purple crepe dress, and Dick Tracy decals which gave her eyes a wild bulging leer. She ushered us into the living room. In the blue-white glare of the fluorescent lamps, we saw drab adobe walls, greasy with fingerprints, chipped wicker furniture set around a "carpet" of leopard-printed cotton, and potted palms dying in every corner. Except for the blinding light, it would have made just the setting in which a Conrad sea captain might go to pieces over demi-mulatto and half-caste women.

The madam asked what we wanted and one of the men answered "Superman." She gave us a look of feigned surprise—lasting for about half-a-second and then shrugged, deciding it was pointless. She said it would cost $30 for our party of six, and we could choose two girls "to work with him."

With that, our impresario disappeared for about five minutes and returned with a parade of 12 dark, skinny girls dressed in black mesh stockings, high heels, G-strings, and bras. The 12 looked as much alike as the Miss Rheingold candidates used to, though in a slightly less wholesome way, of course. They walked back and forth in front of us like mannequin models affording prospective buyers a close-up of the goods, and then lined up at the end of the room so the men could make their selection. They finally decided on two girls, by what criteria I couldn't imagine. (They later explained that they had chosen the two girls with the largest breasts.) The madam marched the girls from the room, telling us we'd have to wait a few minutes as Superman had two more shows to do before ours. In 10 minutes she was back and took us down a long hall with wood-slatted walls reminiscent of a beach-resort bathhouse. Finally, we entered a room and I got one of the great shocks of my life.

Somehow, I had assumed the room would be huge and dimly lit and that we would do our viewing from a comfortably distant grandstand set-up. It was the promise of detachment that had given me the courage to come in the first place. What I saw instead was a small room, no larger than 8 x 10, done up in bilious landlord green, with the same glaring, merciless fluorescent lighting as in the reception room. Most of the space was taken up by a raised wooden platform-stage, covered with a sweat-soaked cotton mat. A ceiling-high arched mirror on the wall behind the platform permitted a full view of the proceedings. But most astounding of all, to me, was the seating arrangement: a row of benches smack up against the edge of the platform, making it impossible to sit down without having your knees touch the stage. I never dreamed we'd be so close! I think everyone else felt the same way, but no one dared suggest leaving, and I began to wish I had at least brought a pair of sunglasses with me.

When we were seated, the girls came in, got up on the stage, and stripped quickly and efficiently, putting their shoes back on after they had removed their stockings. Each girl had a thin scar running the length of her abdomen, and one explained they had both had hysterectomies. Dick asked how old they were and one answered "sixteen," and the other "seventeen-and-a-half." The girls said Superman was finishing up next door and they began to entertain us by playing with each other—a curtain-raiser designed to warm up the cast as well as the audience. This went on for seven or eight minutes, when the door was flung open and Superman bounded into the room, barefoot and breathless, obviously a busy man on a tight schedule. He was black as velvet, enormously tall, gracefully slim, and almost beautiful. (We heard later he was also a homosexual, which seemed to fit his appearance.) He wore a long white terry-cloth cape which he flung aside as he leaped onto the stage, stark naked. His penis was absolutely tremendous, and, in its relaxed state, hung halfway to his knees. This relaxed state turned out to be something of a problem for, though he watched the girls rolling on the mat and went over to join the fun, he simply could not get an erection. (This unlikely was understandable even for a Superman as it was now 4 a.m. and he had probably been on stage since midnight.) He went off into a corner alone to massage himself into working shape and for a while it looked as though the game might be called.

Finally he was ready, and when he stood up and his penis stood out, it looked more like a peg for coats than anything else. It was truly fantastic. One of the girls went over and knelt in front of him, at which point Muriel, completely unable to contain herself, practically yelled, "My God! She's going down on him!" We were all wondering how the girl could accomplish this without choking (she soon did), and Gloria kept mumbling under her breath, "I can't watch. I can't watch," her eyes never leaving the performance. The other girl began to caress Superman's bottom and agitate him generally in a number of other ways, and soon he slid to the floor and the three of them rolled around together in a variety of postures and combinations. They did this so energetically I began to wonder what I'd do if they landed in my lap, but fortunately this did not happen. After a few minutes Superman waved one girl aside, mounted the other, and worked away in a frenzy until he and the girl clutched at each other and swore huskily in Spanish whispering "*Madonna!*" "*Dios!*" and "*Mamacita!*" until they reached what they would have us believe was an orgasm. With that the show was over. The actors sprang up, bowed, and the girls skipped out of the room.

We were all on the edges of our seats, a little more breathless than the cast, when Superman came over to us, holding his cape around him and saying, as he extended one hand, "Please, you like de show, you give tip."

The men were not too breathless to explain that they had just given the house $30 for this 15-minute show. But Superman, having heard, no doubt, that Americans are a generous, family-loving people replied, "Thirty dollars go to Madam. Maybe you give a little extra for my wife and children."

A Great Year...

69

Yes, it promises to be a great year in any way you look at it, and certainly the things we're looking forward to is a new page every month from the magnificent calendar that appears on the next 12 pages. It is the creation of two brilliant young New York photographers named Steve Horn and Norm Griner. The Horn/Griner Calendar (sometimes referred to as "The Horny Griner Calendar") has by now become something of an institution in the field of commercial art. For six years Messrs. Horn and Griner have been creating their calendars basing them upon historical events (and non-events), and distributing them free to some 2,000 privileged characters in art studios, ad agencies, museums, etc., across the land. Despite all sorts of juicy offers, Messrs. Horn and Griner have steadfastly refused to permit distribution of their calendars to the general public, preferring that the calendars remain a special treat for persons within the art world. On the theory that readers of Avant-Garde are really as much a part of that world as anyone, however, Messrs. Horn and Griner have kindly consented to the appearance of their latest calendar upon our pages. For which the editors of Avant-Garde would like to publicly express their gratitude (and yours, too, we hope).

La Belle Otero, the famous courtesan of the nineteenth century was barred from the casino at Monte Carlo for three days when after losing over a million francs in a mere 12 hours and the croupier having refused her credit on her gold purse, she jumped up on the roulette table, ripped off her dress and demanded of him "What's this worth cochon?"

When the emperor Claudius (10 B.C.-54 A.D.) was off in England Messalina his empress challenged the leading harlots of Rome to a non-stop sex bout the object to see who could sleep with the most men in one night. It is recorded that at dawn after the twenty-fifth engagement the last whore conceded her defeat but Messalina carried on until noon.

'69 FEBRUARY '69

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Blanche d'Antigny was so little made to be a courtesan though quite a successful one that according to her friends she does not know how to get paid when her lovers leaves because she sleeps like a log and her admirers shear a quick retreat when she is remembered. She finally found a way she sews his night shirt to hers before going to sleep.

'69 MARCH '69

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Opera Sextronique was the official title of the work performed by an attractive topless cellist early last year, but a criminal court judge called it indecent exposure and found the lady guilty of performing a lewd act. The judge added that he doubted that Pablo Casals would have become so great if he had performed nude from the waist down.

'69 APRIL '69

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Legend has it that King Ludwig of Bavaria asked the famous Lola Montez to dance for him in the privacy of his chambers. He stared at her bosom with his characteristic concealed curiosity and relish for so long that she seized a pair of shears, cut her bodice open and said, "Is this what you find so fascinating, Your Highness? Come have a really good look."

'69 MAY '69

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In the year 1924 Earl Carroll was fined $2,000 and sentenced to a year and a day in federal prison. He had been found guilty of perjury after denying that at a private party he had young Joyce Lawrey bathe in a tub of champagne for his guests who then drank the ready brew. In violation of the Volstead Act Carroll claimed it was only ginger ale.

'69 JUNE '69

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While doing her wash a lady c[illegible] the dress she had on [illegible] chine and started [illegible] protect her hair she donned [illegible] so that the next [illegible] a knock she threw on a dressing gown that hung near the washing machine and the gas meter. After reading the letters he felt saying "I'm sure hope your team wins today."

'69 JULY '69

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It was on the Jenny Geological Expedition in 1875 that an officer who stopped to watch the troops bathing in a stream was dumbstruck to discover Calamity Jane right in there with the boys, one of whom, a Sergeant Siechrist, had outfitted her as a soldier so that he might have his lady friend right there in the ranks with him all the way to the Black Hills.

'69 AUGUST '69

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A well-endowed widow who went to a surgeon with an ingrown toenail and came home with cosmetic breast surgery won $13,000 in circuit court because her bust, though admittedly firmer, had been reduced from a size 42 to a mere 38 after mammoplasty, leaving her, in her view, "...flat as a pancake," thereby causing her boyfriend to leave her flat as well.

'69 SEPTEMBER '69

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Cora Pearl spent a small fortune on entertaining her friends. Her chef was accustomed to buying a side of beef at a time. Not content with this gastronomic extravagance, Cora wagered her guests one day that she could serve meat which they would dare not cut. She had herself served naked, atop a fruit surprise, with a sprinkle of parsley.

'69 OCTOBER '69

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The term "hooker" owes its origin to General Joe Hooker, a handsome figure of a man who, during Civil War days, spent so much time in the red-light district of New Orleans that the area became known as "Hooker's Division." It followed, then, that the ladies who earned their livings in the houses of this district were inevitably dubbed "Hooker's."

'69 NOVEMBER '69

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Anoted psychiatrist, writing in the "Journal of Sex Research," feels doctor-patient sex is a useful tool "if the patient is to achieve a mature heterosexual adjustment..." He discloses that he has accommodated about 250 patients. This practice, says the doctor, is only for the mature analyst who isn't afraid of his feelings and has a selfless concern for his patients.

'69 DECEMBER '69

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ARE YOU AVANT-GARDE?... OR DERRIERE? WHICHEVER, WE THINK YOU'LL LIKE OUR OFFER, SO PLEASE DROP YOUR GARDE AND READ ON

Dear Reader,

As you know, Avant-Garde is dedicated to the future. However, it is not indifferent to the glories of the past. And so we are pleased to announce publication of one of the most devastatingly beautiful volumes in art history: **Nudes of Yesteryear**.

Nudes of Yesteryear is no ordinary artbook; it is the quintessence of over 100 years of classic nude figure photography. It will undoubtedly stand as one of history's most towering tributes to the beauty of the female form.

The creation of **Nudes of Yesteryear** was a formidable undertaking. It required literally thousands upon thousands of man-hours of toil (labor of love, you might call it). Researchers were dispatched to libraries, museums, and photo archives on three continents. The world's foremost graphic designer, Herb Lubalin (who happens also to be the art director of Avant-Garde), was retained to design the book. And nothing but the finest craftsmanship—including duotone offset lithography, Kabel typography, and pre-imprinted case-binding, ordinarily found in artbooks costing upwards of $25—was ordered for the book's manufacture.

Like any artbook, **Nudes of Yesteryear** is difficult to describe with words. If, as Confucius said, a picture is worth a thousand words, not even the most complete thesaurus could do justice to **Nudes of Yesteryear**. Moreover, since no volume quite like **Nudes of Yesteryear** has ever appeared before, it defies comparison. Suffice it to say that **Nudes of Yesteryear** is perhaps the most novel, exuberant, and intoxicatingly beautiful volume ever printed—a thing of beauty and a joy forever, if ever there was one.

Of course the chief attraction of **Nudes of Yesteryear** is its women (you might call them its *pieces de résistance*). Whether gracing a velvet divan, gamboling through a field of wheat, preening before the mirror of Venus, modeling in an artist's studio, or mounting a street-photographer's donkey, the ladies in **Nudes of Yesteryear** are absolutely sensational! They're bathtub gin, pink-ribbon garters, love in a rumbleseat, French post cards, a curtained bed, tumbling in a hayloft, skinny-dipping in the moonlight. They're the kookiest, campiest, most voluptuous, sportive, and daring women ever to cavort before the winking eye of a camera.

Copies of **Nudes of Yesteryear** are being made available to readers of Avant-Garde and no one else. We have decided upon this policy because the supply of copies is limited and we'd like the book to fall into the hands of those who we believe will appreciate it most—namely, our own readers. To be absolutely certain that this occurs, we are going to make what is probably the most astonishing offer you've ever received in your life: *We're going to send you a copy of* **Nudes of Yesteryear** *ABSOLUTELY FREE!!*

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